Encala

Book 3 of the Heku Series

Published by T.M. Nielsen

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Chapter 1 - Freedom

“Damnit,” Allen said, smiling.

“Want to go out today?” Emily asked, and took his hand.

She grinned at the name of Allen's horse. It had fit when he was an unbroken colt, but now as a gentle stallion, he was the perfect horse for a small boy.

She led him out to the hallway and frowned, there were no guards at her door. She knew the Cavalry was out on a mission and off her bodyguard duty for two more days, but she'd had random guards posted outside of her door since the Cavalry were made lieutenants.

Emily walked Allen through the palace, feeling a sense of freedom. She didn't pass any heku on her way out and then she remembered the Council was meeting today. They were swearing in a new Chief Enforcer, someone named Damon. All she knew about him was that he was another one of the 'old ones' and Chevalier had known him for a long time.

Emily picked up Allen and threw him onto her shoulders as he giggled. He loved to ride up there. She walked the short distance to the stables and looked around, still no heku. The stable was also empty of horses, except for Patra and Damnit.

Emily slipped a bridle on Patra and let her out of the stall. She kept glancing behind her as she put on the saddle, cinched it, and then put Allen up by the horn. Emily slipped her foot into the stirrup and swung herself up behind him. She wrapped a hand around Allen's waist and

held the reins with the other and then clicked her tongue, heading the mare out slowly.

She had seen the rolling hills to the west of the city, but hadn't had time to explore yet. She tapped her heals against Patra and the mare broke into a trot. The city was quiet during the day. Most of the business was done in the protection of the night. She could still hear people talking from behind their doors, and once in a while, she caught sight of a curtain pulling to the side. She was a little irritated by the peeking, but knew she was an odd sight for them.

After many turns and several dead ends, she finally found her way to the green hills. She grinned and broke Patra into a gallop. She loved the way the wind felt through her hair, and she could hear Allen laughing. It was good to get the painted mare out on the open grass. She'd been working hard getting the Cavalry ready, and hadn't gotten to stretch her legs in a while. The afternoon passed slowly as she explored the hillside and talked to Allen.

As she topped one of the hills, Patra reared angrily and Emily tightened her grip on Allen. She calmed the mare down and then saw what spooked her, someone was walking toward them. She watched as he got closer and her brow furrowed.

“Emily?” she heard him ask, and she tightened her grip so hard on Allen that he began to complain.

“Tim,” she said, watching him. She hadn’t seen the man since her time as a prisoner of the Valle, when he was sent to break the bond she had with Chevalier. The last time she saw him, he was fading in and out of consciousness and in pain from her torture.

He stopped a few yards from her and smiled, “I see you had a boy.”

She nodded and pulled the reins, forcing Patra to take a step back, “What are you doing here?”

“I’m a donor, didn’t you know?” he asked casually.

“For the Equites? What happened to the Valle?” She didn’t trust him at all.

“I’m a donor for whoever needs me. I’m making a call in Council City.” He slid his hands into his pockets and ran his eyes over her.

“I suggest you go back where you came from.”

He frowned, “You aren’t still mad, are you? That wasn’t my fault! They forced me to do it.”

“I don’t care who forced whom, you don’t belong in this city.”

“Don’t be mad, Emily, please. I’ve wanted to apologize for a while now, but didn’t know where to find you,” he said, taking a step toward her.

Emily pulled Patra back another step, “Come near me, and I’ll have this entire city on you in an instant.”

“I don’t doubt that. I’ve heard that your husband became an Elder.”

“You heard correctly.”

“I really cared about you, you know that right?” He smiled slightly.

“Oh sure, you let them torture me.”

“No I didn’t. They would take me away until it was time to let you go, I had no say in it.” He desperately wanted her to believe him.

“But you knew, the entire time you were helping them.”

“It’s true, I knew, but I wasn’t helping them.”

“So you weren’t trying to break the bond with Chev?” she asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Ok, so maybe… but I cared about you and I fought to get back to you when you were in restraints.” He slipped his hands out of his pockets and reached out for the mare.

“Get back,” she said, warning him.

He pulled his hands back, “Don’t be like this. It’s been a long time, and now that I’ve found you, I want to apologize.”

“Get lost, you aren’t welcome in the city,” she said again.

“I am welcome. I have a donor appointment with some heku,” he said, taking a step to the side.

“I’m pretty sure I outrank whoever it is your appointment is with, and I say you aren’t welcome.”

He looked toward the city and then back to Emily, “Don’t be like that, Em. I won’t be in the city for more than an hour.”

“Then what? Return to the Valle with information on the Council?”

“I told you, I’m not with the Valle.”

“Oh right… and I’m supposed to trust everything you say.”

Tim smiled and looked at Allen, “He’s beautiful, Emily.”

“I’m not kidding, go away, right now,” she warned again.

“I’ll do what I want. You may be the wife of an Elder, but you’re still mortal, which means to them… you are nothing.” He grinned and winked at her.

“Emily?” she heard from behind her, and turned just as Tim peered around her.

Tim’s eyes grew wide when he saw the seven mounted heku. He glanced to the sides, unsure which way to run, but soon found he and Emily surrounded.

“Are you ok, Lady Emily?” one of the Cavalry asked.

“This man, I know him… he works for the Valle, even helped them kidnap me once,” she said, smiling at the terrified expression on Tim’s face.

“That’s not true! I… well… ok so I was there… when the Valle had Emily, but I don’t work for them,” he said, fidgeting nervously.

“Let’s see what the Elder has to say about that,” one of the Cavalry said before moving his horse toward Tim, and slipping out of the saddle.

“That’s not necessary, I was just leaving,” Tim told them, moving away from the advancing heku. Tim felt a strong hand on his shoulder and he gasped, “Please, I didn’t come to hurt anyone.”

The guard looked at Emily, “What do you want us to do with him?”

She smiled, “Take him to Chevalier, and see if he can talk his way out of that one.”

The heku nodded and pushed Tim ahead, walking back into the city. One of the other heku took the reins from his horse and the Cavalry followed them. Emily watched them go and then sighed when they turned around.

“We’ll need you to come with us,” one of them called to her.

She figured it was useless to try to get more time out of the city, and followed them in, talking to Allen about anything he pointed at.

One of the guards fell back and matched Emily’s pace, “Where’s your guard?”

She shrugged, “I didn’t have one today, apparently.”

“Did you not have one, or did you skip out on him?”

“Hey, I don’t need the attitude,” she snapped. “I didn’t have a guard when I left my room, so I decided to take Allen out for a ride.”

He nodded, his eyes straight ahead.

“I suppose you are going to tell Chev that you found me out here.”

He nodded.

“Great”

Emily and the guard by her fell behind the others. She wasn't in any hurry to get back into the stuffy palace. When they arrived at the stables, the other horses were put away and the rest of the Cavalry was gone. She took her time putting Patra away, and helped as Allen carried the bucket of oats to her feeding trough.

"Welcome back," Sam said, peering around the corner. Allen ran into his arms.

"Are we all set for the training next week, Sam?" she asked, shutting Patra's stall.

"Yes, we are," he told her, and threw Allen into the air, catching him as Allen laughed. "We have those new horses coming in tomorrow."

She nodded, and then watched Sam and Allen until she heard the heku clear his throat, "Let's get inside, the Elder wants to speak to you."

She frowned, "I hate that."

"What?" he asked as he ushered her toward the front door.

"How you all can talk to one another from far away. It's kind of annoying."

He smiled, "It comes in handy."

“Yeah I bet,” she said, her mood turning.

She had been so happy out on the open fields with Allen. Now she was heading in for another round of fighting. She was tired of fighting with Chevalier. It seemed like all they did was fight, then make up, and then fight more. She suddenly had an idea, what if she didn’t fight with him tonight? What if she agreed she made a mistake and took whatever punishment he doled out?

Emily smiled, she knew it was perfect. It would alleviate a fight, yet she knew Chevalier would be skeptical. The palace door opened ahead of her and she felt the guard right behind her. He led her to the fourth floor and into the council chambers. She’d been there once before, but this time it didn’t seem nearly as intimidating.

All thirteen chairs were filled and she looked closely at Damon, sitting in what used to be Chevalier’s chair. He was younger looking, but had dark brown eyes and short, cropped brown hair. Leonid and Maleth were watching her, smiling, but Chevalier was scowling. Tim was on the floor in front of the Council, down on his knees. The rest of the Cavalry stood around the walls, and the one with her moved into position beside them.

“Step forward, Lady Emily,” Maleth said, motioning her forward.

Emily sighed and then stepped up to stand behind Tim, though she didn't even look down at him.

"Are you injured, Lady Emily?" Maleth asked her, concerned.

"No, not at all."

"We aren't here to find out what you were doing outside of the city walls alone, though, we would like to stress that it is not safe for you outside of the palace," Maleth said, glancing quickly at Chevalier.

"Ok," she said, curiously.

"It was brought to the Council's attention that this mortal was involved with your capture by the Valle last year." Maleth motioned toward Tim.

Tim looked up at him and then turned to Emily, his eyes pleading.

"Yes, he was. He was the one I was accused of torturing," she said, slipping her hands into her pockets.

Leonid looked down at Tim as he lowered his head.

"Do you believe him to still be Valle?" Leonid asked her.

She thought, "It's hard to say… but I did warn him not to come into the city."

"Did he say why he was heading in?" Leonid asked.

“He said he had a donor appointment.”

“Was he, at any time, a part of your torture at the hands of the Valle?” Maleth questioned, scowling down at Tim.

“I don’t know. He was there, and he knew he was supposed to break my bond with Chevalier.”

“Tim,” Leonid asked, “Where were you when Emily was tied for long periods of time to the bed?”

Tim looked up, “I was taken away, I swear. As soon as I was let back into the room, I let her go.”

“What was your purpose?”

“She was right, I was supposed to break the bond with her heku,” Tim said softly.

Chevalier growled.

“I didn’t hurt her, I swear,” he said, pleadingly.

Leonid said something to Maleth and Chevalier, too softly for Emily to hear, and when they turned back, Chevalier stood.

“We have no proof that you left the Valle. Therefore, you are to be imprisoned in the Council City prison for ten years,” he said, glaring down at the mortal.

“No, please,” Tim yelled before standing up and turning toward Emily. Two sets of heku hands were on his shoulders in an instant.

“Please, Emily, don’t do this. I wasn’t mean to you,” he said, pleading.

“It’s not my place to question the Council,” she said, smiling sweetly at him. She saw Chevalier frown out of the corner of her eye.

Tim was hauled out of the council chambers by two of the Cavalry guards. Emily turned to leave, but was called back.

“Yes?” she asked, looking up at them. She went to cross her arms, but instead relaxed them at her side.

“This is Chief Enforcer, Damon,” Leonid said, pointing out the new member of the Council.

She smiled at him, and then looked back to Leonid.

“He has asked for a demonstration of your abilities,” Leonid said, and Emily gasped.

Chevalier growled, “That request wasn’t approved.”

“No, I won’t do it,” she said, wide eyed.

“It was merely a request, Child. I am interested to see what you can do,” Damon said, raising an eyebrow at her.

“I’m not a child,” she said through clenched teeth.

“Very well, we won’t force you,” Maleth said. “Your talents are a mystery to us all and I, myself, am curious to see the Winchester ability, if you ever wish to show us.”

Emily turned and noticed the shocked look on the faces of the Cavalry. Apparently, they hadn’t been informed of her heritage.

“Lady Emily,” Maleth said again, and she turned to look at him. “Today will start the Cavalry’s new position as your guard. Two at a time as discussed.”

Emily cringed and then smiled, “Of course.”

She saw Chevalier’s eyes narrow as she left the room with two guards behind her.

Emily walked into her room, leaving the two guards outside of the door, and walked over to where Sam and Allen were sitting at the table. She sat down and scooped some of the macaroni and cheese onto her plate.

“Are you ok?” Sam asked, watching her.

“I’m fine, why?” she asked, and smiled at Allen. He was covered head to toe in cheese and smiled broadly at her. He had Chevalier’s smile.

“Nothing,” Sam said, and pushed away from the table. “I’ll go to the stables.”

Emily watched him leave and turned back to Allen.

“Es Daddy?” he asked, digging into his plate with his hands.

“I’m sure he’ll be here soon,” she said before taking a bite.

The rest of their dinner went smoothly and then Emily ran Allen a bath and sat him in the water. Allen immediately began to play and splash, the water instantly turning orange.

“Emily?” she heard Chevalier call to her. She sighed, when he called her Emily, it usually wasn’t a good sign.

“In the bathroom,” she called to him as she gave Allen a shampoo Mohawk.

She heard Chevalier come in and stand against the counter behind her.

“Daddy!” Allen reached up for him.

“After your bath,” he said, and Emily couldn’t help but notice that his voice was tense.

Emily hurried and finished Allen’s bath, and then pulled him out so she could dry him off with a towel. He escaped from her grasp and ran naked to Chevalier, holding up his hands. He picked Allen up and hugged him closely.

“Damnit,” Allen said, smiling.

“Yes, I heard you went riding today.” Chevalier looked at Emily.

“Ay go?” Allen asked, shrugging.

“I was at work,” Chevalier told him, and handed the toddler back to Emily.

Emily took him into his room and put on his pajamas. She sat in the rocking chair and shut her eyes, with Allen cuddled against her chest. It was almost 30 minutes before he went to sleep, and she laid him in bed and went back into the bedroom, shutting the door quietly.

Emily walked up to Chevalier after he sat on the bed and she straddled his thighs, sitting on his lap facing him.

She decided to preempt his speech, “I won’t do it again, I’m sorry. I wasn’t thinking, and I know it was reckless.”

He frowned at her, “What are you up to?”

“What?” she asked, watching his eyes.

“What happened to ‘I can protect myself’?”

“I can, most of the time, but as we ran into a mortal, that pretty much put he and I on even ground. I’m sorry, Chev,” she said sincerely.

“I still want to know what you’re up to.”

“I’m not up to anything. I noticed I didn’t have a guard, and Allen wanted to go for a ride. I’ve seen those hills for a long time and I just wanted to let Patra free for a while. I should‘ve considered the danger first.” She ran her hands around his neck and kissed him softly.

“Aren’t you going to complain about Tim’s sentence?” he asked, watching her carefully.

“No, it’s not my place,” she said, and laughed when he tensed.

“Since when?”

She shrugged and began to kiss his neck softly.

“Oh I get it… you are just trying to avoid a fight,” he said, and shivered slightly.

She nodded and kissed along his jaw line.

“So it’s not that you actually believe what you’re saying, you’re just trying not to get me mad?” He used his hand to lift her face so she was looking at him.

“There’s no good way to answer that. I don’t want to fight. I’m so beyond tired of fighting.”

“I am too.”

She laid her head against his shoulder and wrapped her arms around him. She pulled closer to him when she felt his strong arms slide around her waist.

Emily pulled back and looked him in the eye, “Do you want me to show the Council?”

“Show them what?” he asked, pushing the hair back off of her shoulders.

“Ashing”

“Not if you don’t want to.”

“Do you want me to though?”

He sighed, “They really do want to see.”

She bit her bottom lip, “I have one condition.”

His eyes were wide, “You’ll do it?”

“If you meet my condition.”

“Ok… what is it?”

“I get to pick who.”

“Did you have someone in mind?”

“No, but I want to know what they did and if it warrants ashing them,” she said, scooting off his lap.

Chevalier reached over and pulled her back onto his lap and brushed his lips against hers, then smiled, “It’s a deal. They’ve been chomping at the bit to see you in action.”

She thought for a moment, “Ok, tomorrow I’m going to go outside and get some sun. Bring me the files of your worst offenses, and I’ll see if I like any.”

He raised an eyebrow, “You’re going to get some sun?”

Emily laughed, “It’s actually good for some of us… Allen’s looking pale and I could use some of that Vitamin D I so love.”

Chevalier looked uncertain.

“Hey, thought you were going to calm down with the jealous streak.”

He sighed, “You’re right, I am.”

She kissed him and scooted off his lap again. He growled and tried to pull her back.

“Nope, not tonight,” she said before grabbing a nightgown and disappearing into the bathroom.

“Why’s that?” he asked, concerned.

She came back out a few minutes later, “Because… I need a trip into a real city first, unless you plan on knocking me up again.”

He thought about that while she lay down, and then he curled up next to her, “I’m not following.”

She raised an eyebrow, “I’m out of birth control pills.”

“There are pills for that?” he asked, shocked.

Emily laughed, “Of course!”

“You mortals think of everything,” he said, turning out the light.

Emily was lying out on a chaise and watching Allen play on the grass. He was in only shorts and was slathered in sunscreen. Emily was in her bikini and had a pair of sunglasses on. It seemed extra bright out today.

Her two guards were standing about 20 feet from her. She was sure the distance was an order from the supposedly un-jealous Chevalier.

“Ma’am?” she heard someone ask, nervously.

Emily looked up at a strange heku. He held a pile of file folders in his hands and was desperately trying not to look at her.

“Oh, thank you,” she said, taking them from him. She turned to ask if that was all, but he was already gone, and she grinned.

She checked on Allen and then looked over the folders. There were 5 of them. The first one was simple, an Encala heku was caught in Council City and when seen, was sending information about the layout of the city by means of a cell phone.

Emily wrinkled her nose and looked through the next file. She started to laugh as she read the description: Extremely attractive mortal caught barely dressed on the lawn causing all heku to become distracted and neglect their jobs.

She tossed that folder to Allen to play with and grabbed the next one. This one was in more detail, but from what she could gather, this heku killed his mate and roommate over a donor. She kept reading, baffled that he would kill two heku over food. She set the file on the chair beside her and tossed the first file onto the ground.

The fourth folder she tossed on the ground immediately. She didn't think a female heku that tried to join the Encala warranted being ashed. The fifth was the heaviest folder and she opened it, casually thumbing through photos of the inside of a house. She looked at them quickly, not seeing anything of importance. Finally, she found the written report. This heku captured and held four mortals for days, feeding off of them as he pleased and eventually killing them.

Emily frowned and turned back to the photographs, still not seeing why they were included. She narrowed it down to the two. She glanced back at her guards and wondered how she would be able to meet with these two heku.

"Sam?" she called out, sitting up.

"Yes, Emily?" he asked when he walked up to her a few minutes later.

"Take Allen please, he's going to need some lunch."

Sam nodded and picked up Allen, and then headed into the house.

Emily stood up and walked over to the guards, who avoided looking at her at all costs.

"So," she said, rocking back and forth on her heels.

"Yes?" one of them asked, still looking away.

“How might I go about getting down to the prison to speak to two prisoners?” she asked, and winced when they both looked at her, alarmed.

“Why?” one of them asked.

“I have some folders here that the Elders sent over, and I am picking one for... well… punishment. I can’t decide between the two, so I want to meet them.”

“We’ll have to run it by the Elder.”

She cringed, “Do we have to? Can’t I just go down and talk to them with you? They’ll be in their cells.”

Both shook their heads.

“Fine, go ask him,” she said, as one of them blurred away.

Emily slipped on a sundress when the heku guard returned and handed it to her, “He said we have permission… but you are to stay back from the bars.”

She nodded, surprised that Chevalier was going to allow this. She was beginning to realize how badly the Council wanted to see what she could do.

The prison cells were lined up, row after row. Emily could only catch a glimpse of how big the prison was when she was led down a row and a heku guard pointed toward a cell. Emily heard a hiss come out of the cell toward her, and her guards crouched and hissed in return. She watched the heku in the cell. His eyes were fierce, unnatural, and fixed on her neck.

“May I ask you a few questions?” she asked him.

“Depends on what you want to know, mortal,” he said, as he ran his tongue along his cracked lips.

“Why did you kill your family?” She thought it was a straight forward question, but he inhaled sharply and his hands balled into fists.

“Come closer and I’ll tell you,” he said, and Emily felt a strong hand on her shoulder, though she had no desire to step toward him.

“No, tell me now, or I leave. I have others to talk to,” she said, coldly.

“My family?”

“Yes, it’s reported you killed the ones who lived with you.”

“They wanted my donor,” he said, cocking his head to the side and looking at her.

“So they deserved to die for that?”

“Yessss,” he hissed again, and inhaled deeply.

One of the guards slammed his fists into the bars and the heku prisoner jumped back slightly.

“Watch yourself!” the guard yelled.

Emily sighed, “Take me to the next.”

The guards led her back out into the main passageway, and then walked past the rows of cells before turning and facing one.

Emily looked into the cell, the heku inside looked miserable. He was sitting on the bed with his head in his hands.

“Are you ok?” she asked.

He looked at her and jumped to his feet, “A mortal? Here?”

“I have a question for you.”

He watched her, shocked.

“Why did you kidnap the mortals and then kill them?”

He sat down hard on the small cot, “It was an accident. They were being paid to stay for 4 days but… I couldn’t stop.” His voice was full of anguish.

She watched him for a bit, and then turned to leave quickly. She couldn’t watch him anymore and the hisses and stares coming from the dark cells gave her the creeps.

Once she got back up to the polished marble and brightly lit hallways, she stopped and leaned against the wall.

“Are you ok?” one of the guards asked, touching her arm lightly.

She nodded, “Tell Chevalier I’ve picked one.”

One of the guards blurred away and Emily stayed, leaning against the wall.

“Are you sure you’re ok?” the remaining guard asked, concerned.

She nodded again, but didn’t speak.

Within moments, the other guard appeared at her side, “They would like to meet with you in the council chambers.

“Now?” she asked, surprised.

“Yes, they said we are to bring you immediately.”

Emily followed them into the now familiar room and looked up at the Council.

“Lady Emily, we very much appreciate you doing this. Elder Chevalier explained how hard this is for you,” Maleth said, smiling at her.

She watched the floor.

“Who have you chosen?” Maleth asked, breaking the silence.

“The one that killed his family,” she whispered.

She heard someone stand and looked up just as Chevalier appeared at her side.

“You don’t have to do this,” he whispered.

“Just get it over with… I just...”

“What, Em?”

“I just don’t want to see him,” she said, and he took her hand and led her up onto the Council’s stand.

He turned his chair away from the room and she sat down, still watching the pattern in the floor. A few minutes later, she heard the door open and a low hiss escaped from the heku behind her. Chevalier’s hands balled into fists and she heard one of the guards growl.

“You will behave, or I’ll have your head,” a guard said.

Emily took a deep breath, “When?”

Leonid spoke softly, “Whenever you are ready, Child.”

She nodded, ignoring the child comment, and concentrated. It was over before any of the Council even had time to blink. The hissing heku was nothing but a scattered pile of ash in the blink of an eye. Emily stayed facing away from him, and she heard the council members gasping and talking quickly among themselves.

Chevalier put a hand on her shoulder.

The entire room grew silent as Emily sat in the chair and began to tremble.

“Em?” Chevalier asked, kneeling beside her. Her eyes were staring intently at the floor.

“Please, don’t make me do that again,” she whispered, but the keen hearing of the entire Council heard her.

“I won’t,” he said, and helped her stand up.

He wrapped his arms around her and turned to the others, “I’m taking her upstairs.”

They all nodded, watching Emily with compassionate eyes. They understood how hard it had been for her, her love of the heku was well-known.

Chevalier led her out of the council chambers and looked back as the Elders leaned over the desks to again look at the ash.

They stepped into their room and Emily immediately lay down on the bed. Chevalier pulled the covers up over her and sat down beside her. Silence filled the room and soon, Emily was asleep. He watched her, amazed at how hard it was for her to kill. He found it easy, never looking back, and never thinking twice when he brought justice by death.

Chapter 2 - Round Two

“Holy geesh,” Emily said, watching the new group of guards report for cavalry training. They were enormous. The seven came toward her, and she couldn’t help but take a step back some. They looked like tall bodybuilders hulking forward.

The seven current cavalry members were with her. They were to watch her and help train the new guards. They formed a V, with Emily at the front and they watched the new recruits carefully.

Emily heard a familiar sound as they drew closer, the chink-chink of spurs. She looked down and saw that the largest of the new recruits was wearing spurs on his black cowboy boots. She wasn't sure why, but for some reason, this new group made her uneasy.

"Thank you for coming, my name is Emily and I'll be helping you with the horses," she said, not stepping forward as usual. She watched them carefully. Six of them watched her as she spoke, but the largest, the one with spurs, wouldn't look at her. She frowned slightly and continued.

"First off, will you remove your spurs please?" she asked, looking at the one she nicknamed Tank in her head.

"No," he said, watching above her head.

She frowned and then walked up to him. As she looked up to meet his eyes, she realized exactly how tall he was. Emily normally didn't let her height hinder her, but as she looked into the eyes a good two feet above her, she felt her resolve fading. She knew better than to show any kind of weakness around the heku, so she squared her shoulders and put her hands on her hips.

“Excuse me?” she snapped at him.

“I said, no.” He looked down at her and his broad shoulders shook slightly as he laughed.

“Take them off, now,” she ordered.

Too fast for her to even react, the large heku put a finger against her forehead and pushed hard, sending her to the ground as he muttered another, “No.”

In less than a second, the heku, Tank, was pinned to the ground by four of the Cavalry. His neck was wrenched roughly to the side, one fraction of an inch more and his neck would break.

“Touch me again and I’ll have your hands removed,” she said, standing up and brushing herself off. She reached down and untied his spurs, then slipped them off of his boots. She tossed them into the trash.

“Are we going to have more trouble with you, Boy?” one of her guards asked him.

“No, Sir,” Tank snapped.

The guards let the large heku up and he stood up slowly and glared at Emily. She ignored him as her guards returned to her back.

“Fine, does anyone else have a problem with me?” she asked, irritated.

When no one spoke, she pointed to the first recruit, “Let’s go find you a horse.”

Emily took each of the recruits through the stables, picking out a good horse for them. She didn’t have many choices. The heku were so large, that she had to pick the tallest she could find. Each was handed a brush and told to brush down their horse. She was nervous when it was time to take Tank around, and he walked behind her, obviously not wanting to be with her at all.

Once they were out of sight of the others, Emily turned to him, “What’s your problem?”

“You are,” he said, looking down at her.

“Well get over it or get out of my stables,” she hissed, crossing her arms.

“I can’t get out, this was an order,” he snarled at her.

“Then get over it,” she said, turning around.

“You know you have no right being here… a mortal in the palace, it’s embarrassing,” he said, following her.

Emily ignored his remark and took him to the stall of the largest horse she had. She opened the stall and turned, “This one’s yours.”

He stepped inside and took the horse roughly by the mane, “Stupid animal.”

The horse pulled against his strong hands and Emily jumped at him, stepping between him and the horse, “Let go.”

Tank let go of the horse and stood inches from Emily, looking down at her. He was so close she could feel the anger radiating from him.

“You telling me what to do, Tiny?”

“Yes I am, and if I ever see you touch another horse with anything but soft respect, you’ll have to deal with me,” she said, seething.

Emily felt her feet leave the ground as the heku picked her up by her arms and lifted her above his head.

“I don’t take orders from a mortal,” he told her, and roughly shook her.

“Let go of me,” she said, gritting her teeth.

He dropped Emily and was immediately thrown to the back of the barn by her guards. She felt the crack in her ankle as she landed hard on the ground. She rolled onto her side and grabbed her leg, screaming slightly

at the pain. The sound of the heku being torn apart by her guards could be heard throughout the stables, and the other new guards came to see what happened.

They were immediately able to see the large heku being taken apart and Emily lying on the ground in pain, her foot at an abnormal angle to her leg. One of them knelt down by her, being careful not to touch her.

“Lady Emily, are you injured, other than your ankle?” he asked, watching her.

Emily shook her head and groaned. The pain in her leg was intense.

“What’s going on here?” she heard Kyle snap. The seven cavalry members stood up, covered in blood. Body parts of a heku were tossed into a pile in the corner.

He didn’t see Emily when he first walked up. The six new recruits were crouched around her. As they parted, he gasped and knelt beside her. She was gripping her leg and he saw the break in her ankle.

Kyle picked her up quickly and cringed when she moaned in pain.

He turned to the Cavalry, “Mark, Bill, Pat… come with me… you other three get the horses put away and get this cleaned up.”

Kyle blurred into the palace, followed by the three cavalry members. He set her down on the bed and looked at her ankle. He could see a bone protruding against the skin and her foot was swelling and bruising a dark blue.

“Mark, get Chevalier. Pat, get the doctor,” he ordered.

The doctor appeared in the room and his eyes grew wide when he saw her ankle. He sat down quickly and pulled a syringe from his bag, filling it with a clear liquid.

“What’s that?” Kyle asked.

“Pain meds, we need to get her to a hospital,” he said, quickly giving her the shot.

“Why can’t we do this here?” Kyle asked, surprised Emily didn’t complain about the shot. He realized she was in too much pain to argue with the doctor.

“I don’t have an x-ray machine, and she may need surgery to re-set the bones. Then she’ll need a cast and crutches.” He was feeling her foot for a pulse.

“Pat, go get the helicopter ready,” Kyle growled, and the heku ran off, almost running into Chevalier, who was just coming through the door.

“What’s going on?” Chevalier hissed as he saw the doctor and Kyle sitting on the bed. He couldn’t see Emily behind them, but knew she was injured.

“We’re taking her to the city. She’s going to need surgery to fix that,” the doctor said, standing up.

Chevalier grew furious when he saw her ankle. He growled and blurred to her side. Kyle stood up and allowed the Elder to take his spot.

“Emily?” he asked, taking her hand. He wiped the sweat from her forehead and cringed when she didn’t respond.

“She’s medicated, I had to stop the pain,” the doctor said, looking at Chevalier nervously.

“What happened?” Chevalier asked Kyle.

Kyle turned to Bill, “Tell us.”

The heku stepped forward, “It was one of the recruits, Sir. We could tell from the start that he didn’t like Lady Emily, and first thing, they got into a fight over his spurs. He knocked her to the ground, and we were ready to kill him, but she let him off with a warning.”

“He touched her, first thing?” Kyle asked, angrily.

Bill nodded, “Then, as she was showing him to his horse, we heard her tell him to let her down. When I rounded the corner, he had her lifted above him by her arms, shaking her, and then he dropped her. That’s when her ankle broke.”

“Where is he?” Chevalier hissed.

“Dead, we took care of him,” Bill said, proudly.

Pat came back in, “The helicopter is ready.”

Chevalier picked Emily up. He hated the way she was limp in his arms.

“Kyle, come with me. You three, go talk to the recruits, this won’t happen again,” he growled at them. The three cavalry members bowed and headed out the door.

As Kyle and Chevalier got into the helicopter, the pilot spoke, “We have an ambulance waiting at the helipad.”

Chevalier nodded and fastened the seat belt. He took Emily’s head and held it against his shoulder. Her foot had grown larger and the bruise was traveling up her leg.

“How long until we get there?” Kyle asked the pilot, as he saw the city beneath them.

“Only a few more minutes,” the pilot told him, and he was soon bringing the helicopter down onto the helipad. As promised, an ambulance was standing by.

The paramedics took Emily from Chevalier after Kyle reminded him that he had to let her go. Kyle crawled into the front of the ambulance with the driver, and Chevalier got into the back with Emily. He watched as the paramedics braced her foot. Even with the medication, she groaned with the pain and Chevalier hissed as his eyes narrowed. They worked on her the entire way to the hospital, and by the time the ambulance pulled into the garage, Emily had an I.V. and several ice bags on her swollen ankle.

As the EMT’s wheeled the gurney into the hospital, a nurse came and started asking questions, filling out a small form.

“Name?”

“Emily Russo,” Kyle said when Chevalier didn’t.

“Age?”

Kyle did the math in his head, “She’s 27.”

“What happened?” the nurse asked, still writing.

“She got bucked off of a horse,” Kyle said, noticing Chevalier glanced at him.

The nurse quit writing when the doctor came in and shook Chevalier’s hand.

“Let’s see, what have we here?” he asked, before picking the ice packs off of her ankle and frowning.

“She got bucked off of a horse,” Chevalier told him, following Kyle’s story.

“Ok, let’s get an x-ray and then I’ll know more. Erm… why is she unconscious?” He raised an eyebrow.

“There’s a doctor on my staff. He gave her pain medication,” Chevalier said, not noticing the way the doctor cocked his head to the side, curiously, when he mentioned that he had a doctor on staff.

“Both of you, out,” another man said. He came in and placed a heavy lead apron over Emily. Kyle and Chevalier stepped out as he took x-rays of her foot. Kyle had to hold Chevalier back when they heard Emily groan as the tech moved her foot slightly for a different angle.

When the x-rays were done, the two heku returned to Emily’s side as a nurse put medicine into her I.V.

“What is that?” Kyle asked her.

“Antibiotics, we’re prepping her for surgery,” she said, smiling at Kyle.

“Surgery?” Chevalier asked, as the doctor walked in.

“Yes, her ankle’s pretty bad,” he said, as he brought her x-ray up on a computer screen. He pointed out the multiple breaks.

“We’re going to have to pin those to get them to set correctly. The surgery shouldn’t take more than a few hours. Ahh, Dr. Phillips…” the E.R. doctor said, shaking the hand of a man that walked in.

Dr. Phillips bent down and studied the x-ray as the other doctor spoke, “Dr. Phillips is an Osteopathic Surgeon. He’ll be doing the surgery.”

Chevalier watched as Dr. Phillips turned to Emily and moved her foot around. She moaned slightly and Kyle again had to restrain Chevalier.

“Ok, let’s get her in there. If it swells any more, it’ll be harder to set,” he said. Dr. Phillips wasn’t friendly, but the nurse assured them that he was the best. Chevalier kissed Emily’s forehead as they wheeled her toward the operating room.

An orderly came and took Chevalier and Kyle to an empty waiting room, and offered them both some coffee. Kyle smiled up at her and told her they were fine.

“How are the new recruits picked?” Chevalier asked Kyle, after a few minutes of silence.

“They apply for the position, and then Commander Castel picks them based on years of service and ability,” Kyle explained.

“Do they know the training involves Emily?”

“Yes, they do, it’s one of the first things they are told.”

“So this one… he planned on confronting her,” Chevalier said, watching Kyle.

Kyle shrugged, “That’s all I can think of. It hadn’t even been two minutes into the training when he first got into an argument with her over the spurs.”

“From now on, you interview them first. Have Emily in the room with you and see how they react to her.”

Kyle nodded. The rest of the wait was in silence, and when Dr. Phillips came into the room, the heku stood up.

“Everything went well. The ankle is set and as soon as she comes out of anesthesia, she can go home,” he explained.

Chevalier nodded and shook the doctor’s hand before he left.

A short squat nurse came in a few minutes later and smiled at them, "You can come in now if you want."

Both Kyle and Chevalier followed the nurse into post-op and took the chairs by the bed. Emily's lower leg and foot were in a pink cast and propped up on a pillow. She was still asleep, deeply asleep Chevalier figured, because her I.V. and oxygen were still intact.

As Emily began to come out of the anesthesia, Chevalier took one of her hands and Kyle took the other, wrapping his other hand around her I.V. She blinked a few times and looked around the room.

"Where am I?" she asked, her voice cracking.

"You're in the hospital because they had to do surgery on your ankle," Chevalier said, touching her cheek lightly.

"It hurts," she told him, and shut her eyes again.

Chevalier reached over and pushed the call button and waited for a nurse to come. When she did, he asked for more pain medication, but the nurse explained that they couldn't give her any yet and then left. She wasn't sure why, but she felt uncomfortable in that room.

It was only a few minutes before Emily opened her eyes again. Kyle released her hand and she reached over and rubbed her upper arm. The

hospital gown pulled up and showed the dark bruise in the shape of a hand. She heard Chevalier growl deeply and covered her arm again.

“How long do I have to stay here?” she asked, looking down at the cast on her leg.

“You get to come home today, as soon as the doctor comes in and releases you,” Chevalier said, still holding one of her hands.

Emily quickly removed her oxygen cannula with her free hand and was reaching for her I.V. when Kyle took her hand again.

“Can I still work with the guards?” she asked Chevalier.

He sighed, “We’ll talk about that later.”

“He hated me,” she said to Kyle.

Kyle nodded.

“Do the others?”

He smiled, “No, and if they do, they wouldn’t show it now.”

Emily sighed, “My guards killed him didn’t they?”

Kyle nodded and was shocked when she didn’t complain.

Dr. Phillips came in, “How are you feeling?”

Emily shrugged, “Like my leg got run over by a truck.”

He smiled, “I’m sure it does.”

The doctor turned to Chevalier, “Keep her in bed today and then she can get up and around on crutches. I’ll send some pain pills home with her. If it starts throbbing, prop it up above her heart.”

Chevalier nodded and took a stack of papers from the doctor.

“Can I still ride?” Emily asked, and the doctor smiled.

“Yes you can. It’ll keep you off of your ankle, so I’m good with that. The nurse will be in in a second to bring some forms for you to fill out, and then you can go home. She’ll get you some crutches too.” The doctor walked out, still writing in her chart.

“That’ll be fun, lots of stairs in the palace,” she said, and sat up on the edge of her bed before pulling out the I.V.

The fat nurse came back in and smiled warmly, “Oh good, I see the doctor took out your I.V.”

Emily blushed and nodded.

She handed a form to Chevalier, “Just sign here that the doctor gave you instructions. If she gets worse, or the pain gets too bad, there’s a number to call at the bottom.”

While Chevalier filled out the forms, Kyle went to get a taxi to take them back to the helicopter. The nurse insisted that Emily be wheeled out in a wheelchair, even though Chevalier offered to just carry her. He finally relented and grabbed her crutches, then followed them out to the cab. Chevalier picked her up and sat her in the backseat, then crawled in next to her. Kyle took the front seat with the cab driver.

Once they were situated in the helicopter, Chevalier pulled out the bottle of Vicodin the doctor had given him and held one out for Emily. She hesitated, and then decided her ankle was hurting, so she took it and sat back to wait out the ride.

Chevalier carried Emily into the palace and soon found himself surrounded by the Cavalry.

“How is she?” one of them asked.

“She’ll be ok, just on crutches for a while,” he said. Chevalier was torn, he was glad to see that her guards immediately took care of her attacker, but that also meant that he, himself, didn’t get to torture him.

All but two cavalry members turned away as Chevalier took Emily into her room and laid her down. The Vicodin had kicked in, and she was dazed. He watched over her until she fell asleep and then returned to the council chambers.

Emily woke up alone and her leg was propped up on a pillow. Her mind was still foggy from the narcotic, but she felt it starting to clear. She glanced at the clock, it said 7am. Slowly, she sat up and swung the casted leg out of bed and stood up shakily. Her crutches here right by her bed, so she grabbed them and went into the bathroom.

Someone had laid some clothes out for her, a t-shirt and a pair of pants that were modified with a zipper up one leg to accommodate the cast. Emily dressed quickly and hobbled back out into the bedroom. She saw a tray on the small table, and lifted the dome to grab a piece of toast before heading out of her room. It was time to go to work.

"Good morning, Lady Emily," the guards said to her.

"Good morning." She hobbled past them. The crutches were going to take some getting used to.

"Where are we headed this morning?" one of them asked.

"Training, it's almost 8am," she said, looking toward stairs.

“I’ll call them together. We didn’t know if there would be any today,” one of them said, disappearing quickly down the stairs.

Emily set her crutches down one step, and awkwardly stepped down. She accidentally put too much pressure on her injured ankle and cringed.

“Ma’am?” the guard with her asked.

“Yes?” she whispered, as she tried to catch her breath.

“May I have permission to assist you?” he asked, cringing as he watched her try to get down to the next step.

Emily thought for a moment, “Will Chevalier get mad?”

“No, Ma’am. He said if we got permission, we can help.”

“Then by all means.” She just finished her sentence when the guard lifted her up, cradling her in his arms. She held onto the crutches and felt herself being blurred down the stairs. He set her down gently when he reached the ground floor.

“Thank you, that would have taken all day,” she said, and hobbled out the door toward the stables.

Emily finally made it to the stables and watched as the six remaining recruits brought their bridled horses out to stand in line with them. Emily smiled when one of her guards brought out Patra.

Emily moved to her mare's left side and looked at the stirrup. She thought for a moment, trying to figure out how to mount the horse, when she felt hands on her waist lift her up. Once in the saddle, she turned and smiled at Kyle.

"Thanks"

He nodded at her and then turned to the new guards. "There are a few new rules. None of you six are to be alone with Lady Emily at any time."

Emily cringed, but the guards nodded.

"I'm also reinforcing the no touch policy. Any infraction will be dealt with directly by the Chief Enforcer, Damon. That doesn't apply to the seven cavalry members. They have their own rules, and they may assist Lady Emily if she gives permission."

Again they nodded, and she couldn't help but blush.

"I'm watching you carefully," he growled, staring them down. "Listen to her, do what she says, and don't give her any lip."

He turned and winked at her, and then fell back behind her.

The training followed the same pattern as the previous one, as it seemed to have worked out well. The only difference was that this time, Emily remembered to tell them not to stand behind a horse and she was confined to horseback.

After the training with the paint ball guns, Emily headed back into the castle. She was more adept at her crutches now and didn't need carried up and down the stairs. As she stepped into the palace, she felt tension in the air and an eerie silence.

"What's going on?" she asked her guard.

"Valle and Encala Elders are here," he told her, looking around the silent entryway.

"Why?"

"I don't know, Ma'am," he said.

Emily headed for the council chambers instead of up to her room.

"I don't know if you're supposed to be in there," a guard said to her.

"I'm going anyway," she said, matter-of-factly, and her guards followed her nervously.

When the door to the council chambers opened, all eyes fell on her. The Valle and Encala Elders and their escorts hissed and moved as far from her as they could. Emily made her way to the stand with the Equites Council, and shuffled up the stairs. The heku sitting to Chevalier's left stood and offered her his chair. She sat down and blushed when she noticed they were all still staring at her.

"What are you doing here?" Chevalier whispered to her.

"Keeping the peace," she said, and smiled.

"Is this a threat?" one of the Valle Elders said.

Chevalier just smiled at the Valle, "She's not here to threaten you. She's here to make sure we all remain civil."

"This is unacceptable! With her in the room, you have an advantage," one of the Encala snapped.

"So it was ok when you outnumbered us two to one, but now that we have a slight advantage, it's unacceptable?" Damon hissed.

The Valle and Encala Elders looked at one another nervously and then turned back to the Equites, "Proceed."

"It's good that Lady Emily has joined us anyway, as this concerns her," Maleth said, smiling at her.

Emily frowned and looked at Chevalier, but he didn't turn toward her.

"The proposition stands. Either you share the Winchester blood or we attack the Equites and wipe the faction off this planet," the Encala Elder said, looking at Emily.

"Excuse me? What do you mean share the Winchester blood?" she asked.

Chevalier leaned toward her and whispered, "They each want a baby girl from you."

Her eyes grew wide, "No."

Chevalier turned back to the opposing elders and smiled, "You heard her."

"I don't see as though we should be giving her a choice," the Valle Elder said.

Emily stood up and put her fists on the table, "You do realize I can ash all of you at once, right?"

The Elders and their faction members all shrank back some. Normally, Chevalier would calm Emily down, but he was enjoying the look on their faces.

“Just calm, Child. We can discuss this,” the tallest Encala Elder said.

“Start discussing,” she snapped.

“We can pay you, anything you would like, for a female infant,” he said, smiling.

Emily laughed some, “No.”

“Consider it, Child. It would bring peace back to the factions.”

“Call me child again and you won’t get another breath.”

He stepped back behind his guard, “No offense.”

“If it’s peace you want, then why would I give you a weapon?” she asked him.

“To even things up.”

“It’s out of the question. As it stands, the Equites have me and I am in control of my abilities, which makes me the peace keeper.”

“Still unfair,” the Valle Elder said.

“I’m pregnant now… which of you gets the baby?” she asked, and sat back in the large chair.

Chevalier looked at her oddly and secretly smelled her. Her smell was not off, it was normal, and he turned back to them and grinned.

“Is that true?” the Encala asked Chevalier.

He nodded, “Yes.”

Emily watched as the Encala and Valle Elders began to bicker. Soon, their arguments turned into pushing and then a fight erupted with the Equites Council watching.

“Enough!” Maleth yelled, and the fighting heku looked at him. “Lady Emily is not with child, but she has proven to us that you do not have the ability to control one of the Winchesters, as you can’t even control yourselves.”

“It is only fair that we have equal powers to you!” the Valle yelled.

“We will get a Winchester… even if it causes another war,” the Encala said, sternly.

“Over my dead body,” Emily yelled, watching them.

“That is all we will say about it. You haven’t proven to us that you can handle a Winchester in your faction,” Leonid said. He then stood and exited out the back door, followed by Maleth and most of the Council.

Chevalier and Emily sat and watched as the opposing factions scowled and left the room, bumping shoulders angrily with Emily's guards.

"They are going to try to get me aren't they?" Emily asked, looking over at Chevalier. She saw her guards move in closer to them.

"Yes," he scowled.

Emily looked over at her guards, "You ready for this?"

One of them smiled, broadly, "They won't get past us… Wow, we really are guarding a Winchester!"

Chevalier stood up, "I need to talk to the Council alone."

Emily nodded and stood up with help, "That's fine. I'm going to take Allen down to the kitchen for some dinner."

Chevalier appeared in the Council's conference room and saw all were present before he shut the door, "Interesting."

"Yes, very. Each faction having a Winchester would cause an immediate war. Each thinking they could obliterate the other," Maleth said, as his fingertips pressed together.

“Emily was right. She is more of a peace keeper to us… their fear of her keeps them at bay,” Leonid said. “If they had the same ability, it would most surely cause conflict.”

“Not to mention, Lady Emily made it very clear she wasn’t going to give each of them a baby,” Damon reminded them.

“It’s different with mortals. They are extremely attached to their offspring. There’s no way she would willingly give up a baby,” the Chief of Finances explained.

Chevalier nodded, “Now, though, we need to be ready for attacks. If the Valle and Encala team up and attack, it is not going to be a pretty fight.”

“How many can Emily take care of at a time?” Damon asked.

“I wasn’t there, but Kyle said she took out 13 in quick succession, and over a two-hour period, turned 83 to ash.”

“That’s not enough to protect us against a combined attack,” Leonid said, looking around the Council.

“It also begins to wear on her. At first, as you saw previously, she could turn them to ash in less than a second. The more she does, the longer it takes,” Chevalier said, leaning against the table.

“We cannot let them get a Winchester,” Damon said, icily.

“So what do we do? Take her out of the palace to an undisclosed location?” Maleth asked.

“That’s risky,” Damon said. “Here she is well guarded. If we send her out, she’ll have what? The Elder and maybe 30 guards? If her location was discovered, it would be easy for them to take her.”

“I could take her back to the Island. The pier is the only way in and there are a thousand heku living there,” Chevalier said, deep in thought.

“That’s one of the first places they would look for her,” Damon said.

“Is it a practiced skill?” Leonid asked. “I mean, if she practiced would she get better at it? Maybe able to do a hundred at a time?”

Chevalier shrugged, “I’m not sure. She won’t do it though. The only way to practice would be to turn a heku into ash.”

“So we agree she’s safer here?” Maleth asked them all.

When no one disagreed, he turned to Chevalier, “Will she abide by strict rules?”

“That would depend on the rule. She’s not unreasonable, but sometimes the seriousness of the danger eludes her,” Chevalier explained.

“We have to consider that they may try to take Allen as a means to lure her to them,” Damon said.

Chevalier was surprised he hadn’t thought of that, and was glad that Damon was made the Chief Enforcer. He was sharp and missed nothing.

“What rules shall we enforce then? She has 2 guards on her at all times, and so far hasn’t skipped out on them,” Maleth said.

“She promised not to, for that, she saw the need,” Chevalier said.

“I say we up it to four and two on Allen,” Damon suggested, and the rest of the Council agreed.

“No more horseback riding through the city,” Maleth suggested.

“Can we keep her confined to her room then?” Leonid asked.

Chevalier grinned, “No… we cannot. She’s mortal, they aren’t known for their patience, and when Emily gets bored, she gets into trouble.”

“Can we confine her to the palace?”

He shook his head, “She’ll fight against that.”

“So she is unable to sit in one location for long?” one of the council members asked.

“That’s common for most mortals,” Chevalier said, smiling. He knew Emily was actually worse than most.

“So is there nothing we can do more than four guards for her and two for Allen?” Maleth asked, frowning.

“What about the Cavalry training? She’s not going to want to give that up,” Chevalier said.

“I say she keeps training. During that time, she is with no less than thirteen guards at once,” Leonid said, and smiled slightly.

“Alert her guards, I don’t care what it is, if anything suspicious happens around Emily, they are to dispose of the culprit,” Damon said, sternly.

“Just please, don’t let Emily know that,” Chevalier said.

“Will you please ask her to be more careful about where she goes? Maybe stress the importance of not slipping her guard, though it shocks me that a mortal can elude two heku,” Damon said, baffled.

“You just don’t know Emily,” Chevalier replied.

“There’s one more thing…” It seemed like Maleth was hesitating.

“Yes?” Chevalier asked, his eyes narrowing.

“Allen is almost 3, is he not?”

“Yes”

“Were there plans for another?”

“No, Emily doesn’t want more,” Chevalier told them.

Maleth gasped, “So the Winchesters will die off with her?”

Chevalier nodded, “It’s not my place to insist on another baby. She’s the one that has to carry it, and go through labor, and she doesn’t want to.”

“Those powers though, we can’t let them disappear,” Leonid added.

“I don’t think she cares about the powers. She’s been attacked her entire life, including when guarded, and she may not wish to pass that on.”

“Ask her, please. See if she will consider having a girl,” Maleth asked.

“You realize we don’t get to choose the gender.” Chevalier gave half-grin.

Maleth nodded, “Still, please try.”

“I will ask, but I know already what the answer will be.”

“How is it being prevented?” Leonid questioned.

“Pills… mortals have made a pill to prevent pregnancy,” Chevalier said, and then grinned. He still thought that was funny.

“Replace them with something… something that looks the same,” Maleth thought out loud.

Chevalier frowned, “I will not. I’m not going to trick her into a baby.”

“No, no, I didn’t really mean that. All we can ask is for you to try.”

Once the preparations were made, the Council adjourned for the night. Chevalier met Emily and Allen back up in their room. There were already four guards posted by the door.

“Sorry I’m late,” he said, watching as Emily and Allen cuddled by the T.V.

Emily shushed him with her finger, and he noticed that Allen was asleep in her arms.

Chevalier picked Allen up and laid him down in his bed, kissing his forehead lightly. He came back out and shut the door.

“I see I got more guards,” Emily said, sitting down on the bed.

“Yes, the Council is worried about the coming attacks,” he said, joining her.

“Are you?”

“Yes,” he said, seriously.

“Is that it? Four guards?”

“Four for you and two for Allen.”

“And?”

“That’s it for now, though they asked that you not horseback through the city anymore. The Council would feel better if you would stay in the palace, but I’ve told them that won’t happen.” He took her hand in his.

“Do I get to keep training the Cavalry?” She was worried about that.

“Yes, it’s the safest place for you, actually. You’ll be with at least thirteen heku.”

“I see, and I’m guessing they will be touchy.”

He nodded, “We have to have them watching carefully.”

“I know what you’re going to ask and yes… I will be good,” she said, smiling.

“We understand it’s hard for you to be under so much protection, but we can’t risk them getting to you,” he said, and kissed her softly.

“I’ll behave, I promise.”

“There’s one other thing,” Chevalier said, hesitating.

Emily looked at him suspiciously, “What is that?”

Chevalier rubbed the back of his neck with his hand, “It’s something… rather personal. I told them no, but I had to promise I’d ask.”

She frowned, “Just spill it.”

“The Council wants us to consider having another baby,” he said, grinning sheepishly.

Emily laughed, “They didn’t.”

He nodded.

“Why do they care?”

“The Winchester powers only go through the female blood line.”

“Oh I see, and when I die, the ability to ash leaves with me,” she said, understanding.

Chevalier nodded, surprised she was finding this amusing.

“So that’s what the Council wants… what do you want?” she asked, crawling onto his lap and facing him.

“I want what you want,” he said, and pressed his lips against hers.

She pulled back, “That’s a cop out. What do you want?”

He sighed and brushed the hair off of her shoulder, “I wouldn’t mind another.”

“Wouldn’t mind?”

“What do you want me to say? Yes… I’d like to have another baby.” He grinned, knowing she’d won that.

Emily smiled, “I’ve been thinking about it anyway, Allen is 3 and he needs a sibling.”

Chevalier looked at her shocked, “So that’s a yes?”

She nodded, “They do realize, though, it could be a boy.”

“I told them that. I can’t believe you said yes.”

“Why’s that?”

“You were so adamant about not having another.”

She shrugged, “Yeah well, things change. Understand, though, that I wasn’t even supposed to have one baby. It may not matter what we do, there may not be any more Winchesters.”

Chapter 3 - Play Time

“I’m calling a day off,” Emily said, as they gathered for cavalry training. She’d had her cast off for a few weeks, and it was time to have some fun. They all looked at her questioningly as she was in her black sports bra and a pair of cut-off sweat pants that were rolled down at the top to fit against her hips.

“You are?” Kyle asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Yes, can I do that?”

“Sure”

“Good… then line up,” she said, and watched as the recruits lined up on the left and the Cavalry lined up on the right. Kyle went and stood by her.

“Ok… you,” she said, pointing to the first new recruit. “Take your shirt off.”

He frowned slightly and then did as he was told.

“Ok, Mark,” she said, turning to the second cavalry member, “Shirt off.”

Kyle looked at her, oddly, not sure what she was up to.

Emily went through the two lines and every other heku removed their shirt.

“Kyle, your turn.” She grinned.

He shook his head and took his shirt off, “Now what?”

Emily disappeared into the tack room and came back with a football, “Time to play.”

The gathered heku all grinned and divided up automatically, shirts against skins.

“I’ll be quarterback for the shirts… obviously.” She couldn’t help but blush some, “Kyle will be quarterback for the skins. When we aren’t playing offense, we’ll help with defense. The end zones are already marked with my shoes.”

The heku looked at both ends of the lawn and saw shoes on each side. Emily pulled out a quarter and turned to the skins team, “Call it.”

She tossed the quarter into the air as they called heads. She caught it in her hand and looked, skins were going first.

“There’s just one tiny problem,” Kyle said as they lined up.

“What’s that?” Emily asked.

“We can’t tackle the quarterback… that’s kind of cheating.” He grinned.

“Oh right, well…” She tried to come up with a solution, “Then tackle me, I’m tougher than I look.”

Kyle shook his head, “The Elder would kill us for that.”

She frowned, “He won’t even know.”

“Ok then… don’t hit her full force, though,” Kyle said, turning to his team, and they all agreed.

Emily lined up behind one of her teammates and put her hands out to him. He hiked the ball and she backed up, looking for someone who was free. Her linemen were doing a good job keeping the opposing team off of her, and she finally saw a guard off to the side with his hands up. She threw the ball as hard as she could and he caught it nimbly, then blurred to the end zone.

“Touchdown!” Emily shouted, doing a victory dance.

They re-lined up on what was somewhere near the center of the field and this time, Emily was one of the lineman. She grinned at the shirtless guard across from her. Emily glanced to the sidelines when she saw movement and laughed, there was a crowd gathering.

From up on the third floor, Chevalier paced his office, thinking. He stopped for a quick glance out the window, and looked down to see what was going on below. He smiled and shook his head as he saw the Cavalry and the new recruits gathered playing football. Chevalier laughed when he saw Emily lined up defensively against one of the larger recruits. She looked miniscule in comparison to him.

As the ball was hiked, Emily lunged at the new recruit and he turned just as she jumped. She slammed into his back and wrapped her arms and legs around him. He took off down the field as Emily struggled to make him fall. She finally hooked her elbow around his neck and threw herself backwards. The heku fell back and landed to the side of her.

Chevalier decided he'd worked enough for one day, and headed down to join the growing crowd that was watching. He arrived just as the skins team made a touchdown. The scoring heku was high-fiving his teammate.

"Move to the front, Elder," one of the heku in the crowd offered.

"No, I'll stay back out of sight." He was afraid their game would end if they knew he was watching. They were seriously breaking the 'no touching' rule, but he knew that the entire idea had to be Emily's, and he was enjoying watching her have fun.

Emily lined up again behind a heku and put her hands out. As soon as the ball was hiked, one of the skins broke away and tackled Emily. She felt herself being hit and then somehow gently set against the ground. Chevalier started to jump toward them, but saw that the heku who tackled her was being extremely careful.

She stood up and got back in position. Chevalier looked around, there had to be at least two hundred heku gathered to watch.

"What's going on?" Maleth asked, standing by Chevalier.

"Emily has the Cavalry playing football," he explained.

"Interesting." Maleth turned back to the game.

The heku playing center hiked the ball to Emily and she fell back, looking for an open guard member. Her eyes fell on a hole, and she tucked the ball under her arm and ran as fast as she could. She heard her team surround her and knock out the opposing team as they tried to get to her. Emily suddenly felt her feet leave the ground as strong arms grabbed her around the waist, and blurred her to the end zone.

The Cavalry member set her down and she spiked the ball and did a victory dance. She high-fived the guard that had carried her into the end zone, just as Kyle held up a hand.

“I don’t think that’s legal,” he said, returning to the front line.

“What’s not?” Emily asked, and walked back to her position.

“Nowhere in the rule books does it say someone can carry the quarterback into the end zone,” he said, laughing.

“Nowhere in the rule books does it say they can’t,” she said, and pushed him playfully.

Emily lined up facing one of her guards again, and looked him in the eyes. The skins team hiked the ball and Emily dodged around her guard and ran for Kyle as he looked around for someone to throw to. She dove and landed hard against his legs, wrapping her arms around both of his ankles. He swayed slightly and then passed the ball to a member of his team, who then blurred into the end zone.

The shirts team had the ball again, and Emily lined up for the hike. Once she grabbed the ball, she ran back a few steps and then turned when she saw Kyle break free from his opposing guard and run at her. She screamed and ran back toward the wrong end zone and suddenly found herself flat on her stomach. Kyle pinned her, but was holding most of his weight. He took the ball and stood up, then helped Emily up.

The next goal was for the shirts. As Emily handed off to a guard, he broke through numerous tackles and blurred again into the end zone. She began to think the game wasn't fair, anyone who got the ball, scored.

Emily lined up again and crouched down with one hand on the grass as she met Kyle's eye. He winked and yelled for the hike. Her guard broke off and tackled the heku by her, again giving her a straight line for Kyle. This time she tucked her head and rammed into his stomach with her shoulder. The shoulder butt caught him off guard, and he fell backwards and she fell with him, landing squarely on top of him.

"Are you ok?" he asked, a little panicked, but then she laughed and crawled off of him.

"Quarterback sack by the mortal!" Emily yelled, doing her own small victory dance. The crowd whistled and applauded and she blushed profusely.

"I'm honestly surprised you're allowing this," Leonid said. Chevalier was so engrossed in the game, that he hadn't noticed the Elder standing beside him.

Chevalier just shook his head and shrugged, "I promised her I'd give her some freedom and so far, I don't see anything wrong with it." He turned back to the game.

Emily crouched down again and put her hands out. When the ball was hiked, she backed up and looked for someone to throw to. An opposing heku got free of his guard and ran at her. She tried to dodge him, but she felt his hands on her waist as he picked her up and ran her toward his end zone.

"No!" she screamed, laughing as he set her down.

"Safety!" he yelled, and ran to his cheering teammates.

"I am pretty sure that's against the rules," she said with her hands on her hips.

Kyle grinned at her, "I'm pretty sure it isn't. Now we're two points ahead. One more play and back to work."

"Huddle!" Emily called, and her teammates came and put their arms around one another's shoulders, forming a circle with Emily in the middle.

"They're cheating," she said to them.

"I say let's form a V with Emily in the middle… we'll knock them away from you… just run as fast as you can," one of the recruits said.

Emily nodded, "Deal. If we get this touchdown, we win."

The shirts team lined up for the hike. Emily glanced to her left, and then to her right. When everyone was on the line, she yelled for the hike.

She dropped back a little and saw the V form ahead of her. She ran as fast as she could, and heard her team knocking the opposing team away from her. She pushed herself to keep up. She knew they were holding back, but she was falling behind. Emily jumped when she saw the end zone and slid into it. About half of the crowd began to cheer and clap, and one of her teammates picked her up and spun her around.

It was a while before the crowd dispersed, and the first to leave were the Elders. Emily and Kyle met at center field and shook hands. They then walked toward the stables, leaving the teams and the crowd behind them.

"They'll have a party tonight, no doubt," Kyle said, stepping into the barn.

"A party?" She tossed the football back into the storage closet.

"They are pretty hyped. That was some training," he said, and sat on a bale of hay to watch her.

"Hopefully it worked," she said, sitting beside him.

"Oh, there's a reason for the game?"

“Of course… so far in training it’s been cavalry vs. new recruits… now I hope we have a unified group. One group.”

Kyle shook his head and grinned, “That’s brilliant, you know that?”

“Of course! I thought of it.” She frowned, though, “So if they have a party, then four of them won’t be able to go, they’ll be watching me.”

Kyle nodded, “They know that’s part of the job, and it’s 6, not 4. Allen has his guards now too.”

“What can I do to give them the day off?”

“You promised not to slip out,” he reminded her.

“I know, that’s why I’m asking how I can do that officially. What if I promise not to leave my room? You can even stay in the room with me,” she suggested.

“I guess that would be ok.”

“Go tell them and I’ll head to my room. I need to take a shower and get changed,” she said, standing up.

“But that would leave you alone… come with me to tell them and we’ll go up together.”

“True… let’s go,” she said, before standing up and putting a hand out to help Kyle up. They walked out together and called the recruits and the Cavalry together.

“Great job today guys,” she said, smiling. She loved the way they were excited and acting like friends.

“You too, Lady Emily. Who knew you could play football?” Mark said, laughing.

“Last bit of news… Kyle told me you will want to party tonight. So you all get the night off,” she said, smiling.

The guard’s faces turned from excited to concerned, “Who will watch you?”

“I have that covered. I promised to be good and stay in my room. Training is at 8am, though, so don’t do anything that’ll keep you from it.” She suddenly wondered if there was anything that could keep a heku from functioning, they didn’t drink, and they didn’t sleep.

“You know… there is another option,” one of the recruits said.

“Like what?” Emily questioned.

“Like you come and party with us,” he said, and then looked nervously at Kyle for approval.

Kyle shrugged, “Go ahead if you want, Em. Not sure you could be anywhere safer than with thirteen of your guards.”

“Really? I can go?” she asked, but was already heading off with them.

“I’ll tell the Elder,” he called after them.

Kyle walked into the palace, smiling, as the last of the crowd left the lawn. He walked up to Chevalier’s office and knocked.

“Come in,” the Elder said.

Kyle stepped in and shut the door behind him.

“Have a seat,” Chevalier told him.

“I suppose you saw,” Kyle said, taking a seat.

“I did, it was quite interesting.”

“I thought she was just playing. Come to find out, it was her version of a team-building exercise and, well, I think it worked.”

“Oh? Were the new recruits not getting along with the Cavalry?”

“They weren’t fighting, but there was a definite line.”

“I’m guessing Emily is up taking a shower then?”

“Well, that’s what I came to tell you. Emily went to party with them.” He wasn’t sure how that would go over, so he watched for Chevalier’s temper.

“She went to party with the guards?” he was shocked.

“Yes, they invited her.”

Chevalier leaned his head back and laughed, “Only Emily.”

Kyle nodded, “I figured she can’t be any safer than that.”

“Well, while she’s out… we need to discuss the Mortal Ceremony we have next week,” Chevalier said, pulling a file out of a pile on his desk.

“What were you thinking?”

“I’m thinking about maybe sending her and Allen to the island for a week.”

“There’s one going on next week on the Island, too. Remember that Englishman?” Kyle reminded him.

“Damn, I forgot about that.”

“I could take her to my place in France,” Kyle suggested.

“I hate to have her that far away. I have to be here for this one… can you sail?” Chevalier asked.

Kyle looked at him sideways, “Yes.”

“Then I say you take Emily and Allen out on the yacht. Take the Cavalry with you if you need to. It can hold seventy five comfortably.”

Kyle nodded, “Think she’ll go for that?”

“I’m sure she will, as soon as she knows the reason.”

“I’m going to go feed while she’s at the party then, want to come?” Kyle asked, standing up.

“No, I’m good.” He watched Kyle leave.

Chevalier waited patiently for Emily to return from the Cavalry party. He watched as the hours ticked by slowly. He started to get nervous around 3am, but then heard her footsteps coming toward the door. She stepped in and smiled at him.

“Hi,” she said, walking in to face him. She wasn’t sure if he was going to be ok with her out so late.

“Have fun?”

“Sure did,” Emily told him, and headed into the bathroom to take a quick shower. After the football and the party, she was exhausted.

Chevalier went into the bathroom with her and watched through the glass door, smiling. His eyes took in every curve and muscle in her body. Stripping quickly, he joined her in the hot shower.

Emily curled up against him in bed.

"I need a favor," he said, kissing her lightly.

"Oh?"

"Next week we're doing the ceremony to turn a mortal into a heku."

She propped up on her elbow, "Ok."

"There's one on the island, too. Kyle offered to take you and Allen out on the yacht for the week." He watched her closely for a reaction.

Emily hid any worry she had, "You can't go?"

"No, I have to be here for it. Kyle will take the Cavalry with you."

"Sure, sounds like fun," she said, smiling.

She began to worry. Kyle had shown a strong attraction to her, and she wasn't sure how the yacht might affect him. Of course, with the entire cavalry there, he couldn't do much or it would get back to Chevalier.

“I’ll have everything ready for you to leave tomorrow,” he said, and pulled her closer to him.

She nodded and shut her eyes.

Emily yawned and stretched, then opened her eyes, it was only 6am. She looked around and saw that Chevalier was already gone. She got up and dressed, then went in to wake Allen up. He played on the floor while she packed a bag for him.

“Ee going?” he asked.

“We’re going on a boat,” she said, packing the last of his things.

“Boat?”

“Yeah, fun eh?”

He nodded and went back to playing. She loaded some toys into a basket and then went out to pack her own things. Allen followed her out and she put in a movie for him. As she packed a range of clothes for both warm and cold weather, she heard a sound from her bathroom.

“Chev?” she asked, going in to see what he was doing.

A strange heku was crouched in the corner and hissed at her when she came in. Emily froze and crouched slightly.

“Who are you?” she asked.

He crouched lower and inhaled deeply. That was all Emily needed, he lunged at her just as she felt her concentration lock, and ash scattered across the bathroom floor. Emily ran out of the bathroom and opened the door.

“I need Chev,” she said quickly.

The four guards turned to her and saw the terror in her eyes. One ran to get the Elder, and the other three came into her room.

“When did you get here?” she asked them.

“Just about an hour ago. We came when the Elder left,” Mark told her, looking at her suspiciously.

Chevalier blurred into the bedroom, “What’s wrong?”

She took his hand and led him into the bathroom. At first he wasn’t sure what he was looking for, and then his eyes fell on the ash strewn across the floor.

“Are you hurt?” he asked, turning to her.

She shook her head and tears filled her eyes.

“Did he bite you?” he asked, looking at her neck.

“No, he jumped at me but I… I ashed him. I’m so sorry,” she said, shaking.

“Don’t be sorry. I’m proud of you,” he said, taking her into his arms. He led her out into the bedroom.

“There was a strange heku in here. What time did you get here?” he asked the guards.

“We arrived just a few minutes after you left, Sir.”

“Damnit, I should have stayed until you got here,” he growled.

“Get a servant to collect that ash. I want to know who that was and what he wanted,” Chevalier ordered, still holding Emily at his chest. She was still trembling.

He led her to the bed and sat her down, then knelt in front of her, “Calm down, ok? Everything’s fine.”

One of Emily’s guards came up to them carrying Allen, “He said he’s hungry. Can the two of us take him down to eat?”

Emily nodded and they left, so now only four guards remained with her.

Kyle blurred into her room, “What happened?”

“There were a few minutes when the door wasn’t guarded, and in that time, a heku got in here,” Chevalier explained.

“Is she ok?” he asked, looking at her. She was still shaking and looked pale and afraid.

“She’s ok. She turned him to ash,” he said, proudly.

“Good job, Em!” Kyle said, and looked around the room. “I’m going to look around and make sure it’s clear.”

Chevalier nodded and touched Emily lightly on the cheek, “You did nothing wrong.”

She nodded.

He smiled at her, “You have no idea how proud I am of you. You did it!”

Again she only nodded.

“Do you want to go get something to eat with Allen?”

“No”

“Have some coffee brought up,” Chevalier said, and one of her guards disappeared from the room.

“You’re going to bring him back?”

“Yes”

“What if he is a servant, maybe he was just cleaning.”

“Doesn’t matter. He shouldn’t have been in here,” he said, taking her hand.

“Won’t the other Elders be mad if I ashed an Equites?”

Chevalier smiled, “Not at all. They would have probably killed him for being in here without permission anyway.”

Emily took a cup of coffee from the guard and sipped it slowly.

“Maybe the yacht is a good idea, get away for a while,” she said, looking at her half-packed suitcase.

Chevalier nodded, “Yes, it will be. There’s no chance of you getting attacked there. Did you finish packing?”

“No,” Emily said, and stood up. She finished her coffee with shaking hands, and then started packing.

“You’re taking your bikini?” Chevalier asked.

“I wanted some sun, am I not allowed?”

“No, that will be fine,” he said, fighting to control his jealous urge to ban her from wearing it.

Emily sat in the helicopter and watched Chevalier disappear as they took off for the Island. Allen was strapped in and laughing. He loved being in the helicopter. Kyle and two of her guards were with her. The others would arrive by Suburban the following day, and then they would set out onto the Atlantic.

Allen fell asleep shortly after takeoff and Emily followed. She woke up just as the pilot brought the helicopter down onto the castle's helipad. Kyle carried Allen into the castle and laid him down on Emily's bed, and she walked in after them.

"I'll have Gordon bring up some lunch," Kyle said, and left quickly.

Emily curled up by Allen on the bed and watched him sleep. She was ready to get onto the yacht, away from attacks, away from the Valle and the Encala. Gordon showed up a short time later, smiling brightly. He sat the trays down on the table and left.

Chapter 4 - Lost

Kyle cut the engines to the yacht when they were far away from any land. He sat in the captain's chair and watched Emily. She was lying on the chaise in her bikini, soaking up the sun. Allen played nearby with one of the guards. He kept pulling at his life vest, something Emily insisted he wore at all times.

Kyle turned his chair. From up by the helm, he could see the entire boat. The guards were situated throughout the yacht. No one was getting on board without one of the guards seeing them. The ocean was quiet and a light breeze was blowing. He turned back to Emily. With the sunglasses covering his eyes, he could secretly watch her. She was relaxed, not quite asleep, but still enjoying being out on the water.

It was only an hour later that she sat up and pulled off her sunglasses. She looked over at Allen, who was playing and smiled.

"Are you hungry?" she asked, getting out of the chaise.

"Peanut butter," he said, and ran toward Emily.

"Ok, one peanut butter and jelly coming up." She took his hand and walked down into the main living quarters.

Kyle blurred into the room a few minutes later and sat by Allen.

"Is there anything you need?" he asked, looking at Emily.

“No, I think we’re fine,” she told him, and walked over to Allen with a sandwich and chips. Emily sat down with a sandwich of her own and started to eat.

“Are you all going to be ok without eating this week?” she asked him, stealing one of Allen’s chips.

“Yes, we all fed well before leaving. We’ll be good for a few weeks.”

“What about boredom?”

He chuckled slightly, “We’re good with that, too.”

“Sir?” one of the guards called down.

“Is it ok if he comes down?” Kyle asked Emily, and she nodded.

“Come,” he called up the stairs.

One of the new recruits came down the stairs, “Sir, there’s a weather alert coming over the radio.”

“What kind of alert?” he asked, sighing.

“Just a storm warning… high swells, wind, and rain.”

“Ok,” Kyle thought for a moment. “We can’t go back to the island, and it’s too dangerous to go to the mainland. We’ll just have to ride it out.”

“Is that safe?” Emily asked, frowning.

“Hopefully, we don’t really have a choice,” Kyle said, and headed up the stairs.

“Take it off,” Allen yelled, pulling at his life jacket.

“I said, no. Keep it on,” Emily told him, before finishing her sandwich and starting on the dishes.

Emily jumped slightly when the thunder cracked. She glanced out the port window and saw the black clouds moving in quickly. Lightning lit up the sky and she turned back to Allen nervously.

“Want to watch a movie?” she asked, cleaning off his face.

“Pooh!” he yelled and ran for the bean bag.

“Pooh… sure… only 5 times this week,” she replied, pressing ‘play’ on the DVD. She went over and sat on the bean bag by Allen and mussed his black hair playfully. The rain began to pelt the boat and Emily had to turn up the volume to drown out the sound. With every rock of the boat, she cringed and held Allen a little tighter.

A violent crash sounded as Emily and Allen were thrown against the side of the living area. She could feel blood dripping down her forehead, but looked Allen over and he was unhurt. They were lying against the side

of the boat, which meant the boat was listing dangerously. Cold water began to flood down the stairs and into the living area.

Four guards appeared and swam to them. One pulled Allen away from Emily's grasp, and the others took Emily's arms and hauled her through the cold water. They had to use extreme strength to fight against the current as the water surged into the boat. Kyle was watching them from inside a life raft and pulled Allen on board, and then turned to Emily. He helped her hoist into the life raft as it shook with the large waves.

Mark was in a second life raft full of guards. He threw a rope to Kyle, and they tethered the rafts together so they wouldn't get separated. Emily laid down on the bottom of the raft and held Allen with one hand, while she clung to the raft with the other. The wind pounded the small rafts and water sloshed over the sides. Kyle and the guards frantically dipped buckets full of water out of the raft to keep it afloat.

Hours passed as the storm raged. Emily and Allen were both soaked and shivering in the cold. The wind and rain assaulted the small rafts and several times almost capsized them. As the storm subsided, Emily curled up with Allen and both fell asleep, exhausted from the night's storm.

The sun finally broke through the clouds and Emily sat up, looking around them. There was nothing but ocean as far as she could see. Allen

was still asleep in his life vest. Shivering, Emily crawled onto one of the hard bench seats.

“Let me see your head,” Kyle said, pulling her hair back. She had smacked her head against a windowsill as the boat was thrown onto its side.

“Ouch,” she cried out when he touched the cut.

“Sorry, it’s not too deep.” He pulled off his shirt and handed it to Emily. She slipped it on and looked over at the guards in the other boat. One of the guards took his shirt off, too, and tossed it to Emily, so she laid it on top of Allen.

“What happened?” she asked, finally.

“Squall, we didn’t have time to turn into it,” he said, looking out over the ocean.

“Are there any supplies on the rafts?”

Kyle shook his head, “If I remember correctly though, there was a small island just north of where we sank. The waves have been taking us slowly toward it.”

“Was anyone hurt?” She looked over the guards.

“Just you,” he said with a half-smile.

As afternoon approached, the sun began to beat down on them. Emily set up a cover for Allen using shirts from the guards to shade him from the sun. She could feel her skin burning but preferred to have Allen covered.

“Mommy, when’s lunch?” Allen asked.

“We don’t have anything to eat right now, Baby,” she said, taking his hand.

“I’m hungry.”

“I know. As soon as we’re rescued, we’ll get to eat.” She smiled down at him.

“Water?” he asked, pointing out to the ocean.

“We can’t drink that water, it’s yucky.” She was trying to sound upbeat, but she was worried. She was already getting thirsty, and knew dehydration would set in quickly in the afternoon heat.

Emily dipped her hand into the cool water and rubbed it on her skin to calm the burning. She was getting a headache from the head wound and the sun glaring off of the water was making it worse.

The sun set over the horizon and they were thrown into darkness. Emily lay down with Allen, and looked up at the stars. They were so bright out on the ocean. There was a brisk breeze blowing across the rafts and both of them were soon asleep.

Darkness fell on the rafts for the second night. This time, Allen wouldn't sleep. He was crying tearlessly and his lips were dry and cracked. Emily held him and rocked. Her arms were blistering with the sunburn, and her thirst was almost unbearable. The guards watched helplessly, frustrated to be surrounded by water that they couldn't drink.

Late into the night, Allen finally cried himself to sleep and Emily handed him over to Kyle to hold. She curled up on the hard bench seat and watched the moon shine off of the water.

"How are you holding up?" one of the guards asked her from the other raft.

"Ok," she said, though her voice cracked.

"Is there nothing we can do?" he asked Kyle.

"Nothing," Kyle said, irritated.

Emily didn't say it, but she knew that Allen only had a day or so left before dehydration would kill him. She watched him sleep in Kyle's

arms and felt utterly helpless. She wasn't a religious woman, but she prayed that the island would appear soon or that they would be rescued. Surely Chevalier heard her calling for him and had sent help.

Another day approached and as the sun came up, Emily saw something that made her heart jump. The dark silhouette of an island had appeared off in the distance. The guards had already pulled the oars out of the rafts and were rowing toward it. Emily was worried that Allen hadn't woken up yet. His skin was pale and dry and his lips were bleeding. She held him in her arms as the island drew closer.

"Is the island inhabited?" she asked Kyle.

"No"

Just before the rafts reached the beach, two of the guards jumped out and pulled the rafts onto the sand. Emily stumbled out of the raft with Allen and dropped down to her knees. It felt amazing to be on solid ground again.

"You two, walk the perimeter of the island. We're looking for fresh water and something to eat," Kyle ordered two recruits. "Mark, you take another guard and head inland to see what you can find."

Emily watched as the guards set off. Allen opened his eyes slowly and looked around, then went back to sleep. Kyle took him from Emily and she followed them into the cover of the trees to get out of the sun.

She curled up against Allen and drifted in and out of sleep. The shade felt good, but her dry throat was painful.

Mark was the first of the guards to get back, “I found a cave with a fresh spring inside.”

Kyle picked Emily up and cradled her as Mark took Allen, and they headed into the dense trees. About a mile inland, they came to the mouth of the cave. Kyle sat Emily down by the stream and she cupped her hand and brought it up for Allen. He opened his eyes and drank quickly.

“Not too much, it’ll make you sick,” Kyle said as she leaned down and began to drink.

Emily sat up and looked around the cave. The water was pouring out of a crack in the wall. The cave was just a single room, but the cool air felt good against her burned skin. Allen was now on the ground, splashing in the water.

The guards checking the island’s perimeter came into the cave.

“Nothing much to report. We didn’t see any signs of life other than birds, and so far, no food,” he said, sitting down against the cave wall.

Kyle sighed, “Maybe the others will find something.”

With her thirst quenched, Emily was able to lean back against a rock and shut her eyes. The sound of the wind through the trees was soothing, and she soon fell asleep.

“Emily?” Kyle said, touching her hand gently.

Emily opened her eyes and saw the banana in his hand. She quickly peeled it and went to hand it to Allen, but he was already eating. She ate it and picked up another.

“These are so good,” she said, starting in on the second one.

“There are plenty, some coconuts too,” he told her. “Now, what to do about those burns.”

She looked over her arms and legs and saw the bright red burns and blisters. She could only imagine what her face must look like, “I’m not sure there’s anything we can do about it.”

“Well at least stay out of the sun.”

She nodded.

“Have you… tried to contact Chevalier?” Kyle asked.

“Yes,” she said, leaning back against the cave wall.

“The storm blew us off course. We weren’t where we said we would be,” he told the guards. Everyone was gathered in the small cave.

After a sleepless night in the cave, Emily headed out into the trees to explore the island. She didn’t even care that four members of the Cavalry followed her. She watched the birds fly away from her and marveled at the huge green trees. The island was beautiful with the lush, green, mossy ground and thick palm trees. It was also quiet and peaceful after the hustle and bustle of the palace. Multi-colored birds flew above them as they walked, and the guards pushed large flowers to the side to clear a path.

Emily pulled apart some palm leaves, stepped out into a clearing, and smiled at the small pond. A fresh water stream emptied into it, and she stepped in after she slipped off the guard shirt, leaving only the bikini. The guards watched her carefully. The cool water felt good against her burns.

“Come on in,” she said, smiling at the guards.

They looked at one another and one answered, “Not sure we’re allowed.”

“To swim?”

“With you,” he said, laughing.

“I say you are… come on in, it feels great,” she said, ducking down under the water. When she emerged, she saw the heku guards in the water fully dressed. They were walking toward her and splashing one another playfully.

“See, feels good!” she said, swimming toward them a little.

Emily pushed one guard under the water and laughed. He came up and they heard a throat clear beside the pond. The guards looked over at Kyle, who was watching them with his arms crossed.

“Sorry, Sir,” they each mumbled, and swam toward the land.

“I asked them to come in,” Emily told him, following them.

“We have work to do. I want a signal fire and a message etched into the beach. Then we’re going to need more food,” he said as they stepped out.

Emily pulled on the shirt Kyle had given her on the raft, and followed him back to the cave as the guards headed off to get some things done. He reached over and put his hand against the small of her back. Before

they reached the cave, he pulled her close to him and looked into her eyes.

“How are you holding up?” he asked, touching her cheek lightly.

“I’m ok, really. We have food and water, that’s all we need.” She pulled away from him, not wanting him to get the wrong idea.

“He’ll come for us.”

“I know,” she said, smiling.

Before she could protest, Kyle’s lips pressed against hers. She tried to pull away, but he held her close to him. She put her hands against his shoulders and he finally let her go.

Kyle smiled at her, “Sorry about that.”

“No you aren’t. I just don’t want you to get the wrong idea,” she said, moving a step back.

“I know that.”

“I also don’t want you to get caught overstepping. You know the guards would tell him,” she said, watching him.

“I know that, too, but maybe it’s worth it,” he told her, and took a step toward her.

“Kyle, don’t.” She stood her ground and watched him.

He nodded, “Come on, let’s go back to the cave.”

She followed a few steps behind him. She could hear Allen laughing as they approached the cave. One of the guards had collected some twigs, and they were building houses with them on the floor of the cave. Allen had a banana in his hand as he watched his guard build a miniature town.

Emily sat down and grabbed half of a coconut and a sharp rock. She scooped the pulp out and ate it while watching Allen play.

“Sir, we’re at the location the coast guard said they found debris,” the Captain of the boat said to Chevalier. He was standing on the bow of the ship looking out over the water.

Something out on the water caught his eye and he watched it closely as the boat moved slowly towards it. He reached the hook into the water and pulled up a chaise cushion. He knew the debris was from Emily’s yacht, he had these cushions made especially for her in her favorite color. He knew she was alive and safe, he could feel that. He couldn’t, however, figure out where she was, and that infuriated him.

“Are there any islands around here?” Chevalier asked the Captain.

The Captain pulled out a map and started calculating their location, "Nothing close by. Maybe they are out on a raft?"

Chevalier couldn't explain to him that they weren't on a raft. He knew that Emily was too content to be hungry or thirsty, which she would be if they were still out on the water.

"Head for the closest island. I want to check all of them in this area," he said to the Captain. The captain was getting paid well enough, that he just nodded and headed east toward the closest island.

"We should be there tomorrow afternoon."

Chevalier nodded.

"It's worth a shot, it can't hurt, right?" Kyle asked, gathering the coconut milk into the empty husk.

"Yeah I guess," Emily said, and slipped her shirt off. The burns were painful and she was getting a fever and a body ache.

Kyle slowly poured the coconut milk over the back of her neck, arms, and legs. He wanted so badly to reach out and hold her as she gasped in pain. He noticed her color was off and he knew she was running a fever. He felt extremely helpless as he watched her slowly getting sicker.

“That does feel good,” she said, shutting her eyes.

“Get more,” Kyle ordered one of the guards, who began refilling the husk.

After Kyle poured more milk on the blistered burns, Emily could finally lay down without so much intense pain. The guards had piled palm leaves in the corner of the room and then layered their shirts on it for a bed. She fell fast asleep, aided by the fever. Kyle sat by her and watched her sleep, no longer caring what the guards told Chevalier about their time on the island.

Allen tried to wake her a few times, but the guards stopped him and eventually took him out to the fresh water pond for a swim. Kyle was now alone in the small cave with Emily. He gently pulled a shirt over her, and then sat back again.

“Stop,” she whispered in her sleep, jerking slightly.

Kyle put his hand against her shoulder to try to calm down the nightmare.

“Don’t please,” she mumbled.

“Shhhhh,” he whispered, and kissed her forehead lightly. He was worried about how hot her skin felt against his lips.

Kyle got up and soaked a shirt in the cold water, and then put it against her forehead. When the guards returned with Allen, they kept him busy while Kyle took care of Emily. She stopped stirring and fell into a fever induced sleep. He kept a cool rag on her forehead and held her hand through the night. Allen fell asleep curled up with Kralen, one of the guards he had become attached to. The night air turned cold as it began to rain. The cave kept them dry, but the wind was coming in from the opening. Emily shivered slightly and Kyle pulled another shirt over her.

The rain stopped just as morning came and the cave began to warm up. Kyle changed out Emily's cold rag and began to get more concerned when she didn't wake up. Even when Allen started to cry after falling and scraping his knee, she didn't move.

"Is this because of the burn?" one of the guards asked.

"I don't know enough about burns to know, but I'm assuming it is," Kyle said, watching her breathe.

"Want more coconut milk?"

"Yes, let's try that again."

The guard returned a few minutes later with a husk full of coconut milk. Kyle dipped the shirt into it and gently ran it across the burns on her legs,

then moved to her arms. She groaned softly when he touched her neck, and he pulled his hand back quickly.

“Can mortals survive off of bananas and coconut?” he asked Kyle.

Kyle shrugged, “I don’t know that either.”

“I could try to catch a fish.”

“That’s a good idea. Take a shirt to use as a net,” Kyle suggested.

“Mommy?” Allen asked, walking over to Emily. Kyle pulled him into his lap to keep him from touching her.

“Mommy’s sleeping,” he whispered into Allen’s ear.

“Wake up Mommy!” Allen yelled, before Kyle could cover his mouth. Kyle frowned when she didn’t respond.

“Is Mommy sick?” Allen asked Kyle.

Kyle nodded and sat him back on the ground

“Do you think it would help if we took her into the pond?” Mark asked.

Kyle thought for a moment, and then shrugged, “I guess we can try it. So far, nothing’s working to get the fever down.”

Kyle picked Emily up gently, but she still moaned in pain. He carried her limp body to the pond and then stepped in, fully dressed. He walked in until she was submerged and only her face was out of the water. He could feel the heat from her body even under the cool water. As her body began to cool, she blinked a few times and opened her eyes.

"Hi," he said, smiling down at her.

She looked around confused, "Where are we?"

"In the pond. I'm trying to get your fever down."

"I hurt everywhere."

"I know, does the water help?"

She nodded and then shut her eyes again. He brushed his lips lightly against hers and held her close to his body. It wasn't until darkness set in that he took her back to the cave and laid her down on the palm leaf bed. Allen was already asleep on a makeshift bed in the opposite corner. The guards listened to the rain fall all night and watched over their charges.

For the next few days, Emily was in and out of consciousness as the guards played with and fed Allen. Kyle stayed by her side and helped her drink water and try to eat when she was awake. Even awake though, she was dazed and couldn't remember where they were. Kyle stopped

telling her about the island, it upset her, so he lied and told her they were at the palace.

The morning of the thirteenth day on the island, Emily sat up and looked around. Her fever had broken in the night, and the blisters had either dried up or burst. The skin on her legs, face, neck, and arms was peeling.

“How are you feeling?” Kyle asked, handing her a coconut husk full of water.

“Ok,” she said, her voice cracking. “What day is it?”

“Friday”

“So we’ve been here for six days?”

Kyle pushed the hair off of her shoulder, “Thirteen days.”

“No sign of anyone else?” She sat up and reached out for a banana.

“Nothing, we have a guard on lookout with a bonfire, but so far he hasn’t seen anything,” Kyle explained.

Emily ate in silence and watched Allen playing with Kralen. When she was done, she laid back down, feeling tired again.

“How are you all holding up?” she asked.

“We’re fine.” He smiled.

“Not thirsty?”

He shrugged, “It’s manageable.”

“Hmm, I’m so tired.”

“Then sleep,” he suggested, smiling down at her.

“I don’t think it’s a good idea,” Mark said, frustrated.

“I just need some time alone,” Emily explained, heading out of the cave.

“You have thirty minutes, and I’ll come looking for you.”

“I’m not a child, and there’s nothing on this island to hurt me. Stay here and watch Allen,” she said, and disappeared into the jungle.

Emily walked through the dense trees and looked around. She needed time to think, and the tension in the cave was stifling. She knew the heku were getting thirsty. It’d been three and a half weeks since the shipwreck, and as she was the only adult mortal on the island, she could feel them watching her closely. She knew they wouldn’t attack unless it came down to too much pain, but she wasn’t sure when that would be. She also wasn’t sure she could sustain fourteen thirsty heku and she worried about dying and leaving Allen alone with them.

Emily walked for about an hour and then sat against a tree on the spongy moss. She pulled her knees close to her and wrapped her arms around them, “Where are you, Chev?”

She sighed when she heard footsteps, “What?”

Kyle stepped out from behind a tree and sat by her, “Are you ok?”

“Fine,” she snapped. How hard was it for him to understand that she needed some alone time?

He put his arm around her, “I’m worried about you.”

“Why?”

“The bad dreams. It’s obvious you’re worried about us.”

“Of course I am. How long before you can’t control your thirst anymore?”

He smiled, “A long time, you’re safe here. Look at me.”

She glanced away, fighting back the tears.

Kyle put his hand under her chin and pulled her to face him, “You’re safe.”

“For how long?”

“We can go years without eating, Em.”

“You can… but how long before instincts kick in and …” He cut her off with a kiss. She tried to pull away from him, but he held her tightly. He leaned her back against the soft moss and trapped her wrists above her head with his hand.

“Kyle, stop,” she said, trying to get out from under him. He was kissing her neck softly and using his body weight to hold her down.

“Stop fighting me,” he whispered, before pressing his lips to hers again.

Emily turned her head to the side, “Get off of me.”

In one swift movement, Kyle tore her shirt in half and re-trapped her hands above her head, then began kissing down her neck slowly.

“Don’t do this, please,” she said, as she felt his hand at her back, untying her bikini top.

“Just relax,” he whispered, and then ran his tongue along the vein in her neck. She felt his teeth slowly sinking into the flesh of her neck and then the soothing warmth that came with the feeding process.

Emily knew what she had to do, Kyle had obviously lost control. She shut her eyes and focused. Within seconds, Kyle rolled off of her and

writhed in pain. She felt the control. She didn't want to turn him to ash, but needed to incapacitate him long enough to get away.

She watched as his body shook with the pain and his hands clutched at his chest. He groaned with the burning in his body and she got to her feet. She finally released him and watched as he fell unconscious to the mossy ground.

Emily grabbed her torn shirt and held it against herself as she ran back for the cave. The guards looked at her as she ran in and they got to their feet.

"What's wrong?" Mark asked her.

She took one of their shirts from the bed and turned to the wall, putting it on quickly. The two puncture wounds on her neck didn't go unnoticed as a small trickle of blood dripped down onto the white shirt.

"Emily," Mark said, touching her arm.

"Don't touch me!" she yelled, and he quickly jerked his hand back. She ran over and took Allen from Kralen, and then grabbed a small bunch of bananas with her other hand.

"If anyone follows me… you'll be ash before you know it," she said, backing out of the cave.

“Don’t go. Tell me what happened,” Mark said, taking a step towards her.

“Last warning,” she yelled, as she turned toward the trees and ran off.

Emily pulled from her fear and kept running with Allen clutched closely to her side. He asked several times for Kralen, but she ignored his questions and kept moving. She knew she was running north, and kept the steep mountain peek at her right so she wouldn’t end up going in a circle.

Kyle stumbled into the cave and fell to his knees a few minutes after she left, “Where is she?”

Mark glared at his Commanding Officer, “What did you do?”

“I said… where is she?” he snapped.

“She left, and threatened to turn anyone to ash that followed her,” Kralen said, standing beside Mark.

“How could you?” Mark asked, accusingly.

Kyle straightened up and ignored the lingering burning pain, “I am still your Commanding Officer, and you will treat me as such.”

“Yes, Sir,” Mark said, his voice full of loathing.

“Now, go find her,” he ordered, but none of them stood. “Now!”

Still none moved.

“Did you hear me?” he asked, angrily.

“Yes we did. But, we aren’t going to bring her back here, so you can do what you want with her,” Mark told him, and sat down on the cave ground.

As far as Emily could tell, she’d been moving quickly through the forest for a few hours. She could see the sun touching the horizon, and she knew in the dark she wouldn’t be able to move as fast.

“Ew,” Allen said, holding his nose.

Emily smelled it too, a sharp, stinging scent. After sitting Allen down and giving him a banana to eat, she wrinkled her nose and looked around for the offensive smell. She knelt down by a large yellow flower and smelled its petals, wincing at the repugnant aroma. Suddenly, she had an idea. She dipped her fingers into yellow goo in its center and began rubbing it onto her skin. Once she was covered in the flower’s nectar,

she moved to Allen and did the same with him, even slicking back his black hair with it.

“No, that smells,” he said, fighting her.

“Don’t fight me Allen, not now,” she said, and covered every inch of him with the nectar.

By the time she covered them in the stinky mess, she finally felt that maybe their scent was masked. She took Allen’s hand, and the bunch of bananas, and kept walking. When Allen got tired, she carried him, afraid to stop moving. By morning, she came to the northern beach and headed back toward the rocky cliffs. She was hoping to find another cave they could stay in until help arrived, if help arrived.

Allen was awake again and eating a banana as he followed Emily up the rocky cliffs. She could see a shadow above that she hoped was some kind of shelter. She also saw that the face of the cliff was full of the smelly yellow flowers.

“Then I’ll go find her myself,” Kyle said, and started for the mouth of the cave, but found his way blocked by his own cavalry.

“We think you better stay right here,” one of the recruits said to him.

“I’m ordering you to let me by.”

“That’s funny, because it seems all rules are null and void out here,” Mark said, and crossed his arms.

“She can get hurt out there,” he snapped at them.

“She could get hurt here, too,” Kralen said, not moving from the cave entrance.

“When we get back, you are all released from the Cavalry,” Kyle yelled, and sat down against the wall.

“I think not… I think once we tell the Elders what we saw, it’s you that will be released,” Mark said.

“However,” Kralen added, “as a unit, we stick together. So if you want to sit calmly and wait for a rescue, then we may keep it between us.”

Kyle nodded, he knew they had won. He sat quietly in the cave and watched the other guards closely.

The rain stopped just as the sun rose above the ocean. The cave had been quiet all night. As the Cavalry kept an eye on him, Kyle stayed against the wall. There was some lingering burning in his chest.

“Someone’s coming,” Mark said, standing up.

“Maybe she came back,” Kyle stood up and gasped, wide eyed, when Chevalier appeared.

Chevalier smiled when he saw them, “Finally!”

His smile fell when he looked around at the serious faces, most of them watching the ground. Chevalier looked around the cave and reached down to pick up the torn shirt from the floor. He saw the two palm leaf beds and turned to Kyle, “Where’s Emily?”

“She took off yesterday morning with Allen,” Kyle said, avoiding Chevalier’s eyes.

He took a step toward Kyle, “Why did she leave?”

Kyle looked over at Mark, “We aren’t sure.”

“You aren’t sure? Then what? You just let her go?” Chevalier asked, suspiciously.

“She threatened to turn us to ash if she saw us,” Kralen added.

“You are keeping something from me, and I will find out,” he hissed.

The guards all looked at one another nervously.

“First, find her. She can’t be that hard to track,” he ordered, and Kyle and the guards scattered across the island.

Chevalier picked up her scent just outside of the cave and followed it as it wound through the trees. He had to move slowly, too fast and he risked losing her scent. He came to a small clearing and saw where the grass was pushed down. He frowned and grabbed her bikini top from the moss. He tucked it into his pocket and scanned the clearing. Once he found no other scent trail, he surmised that she must have headed back to the cave.

Chevalier heard a voice on the wind saying they found her trail going north. He quickly arrived at the cave and passed it, following the scent of the other heku. By late afternoon, he caught up with them as they walked around an area full of flowers.

"Why have you stopped?" he asked, still suspicious of them all.

"We lost her scent," one of them said.

Chevalier inhaled deeply and could smell the faint trace of her. He walked north and lost the scent, growling in frustration, "She can't just disappear."

"We just need to find her scent again. It has to be around here somewhere. Even Allen is old enough to leave a trace," Mark said, obviously irritated.

"If she's alive," Chevalier said, turning to him.

“She’s alive,” Mark assured him.

“You better hope so, and you also better hope she tells me what happened. It’d be a lot easier than if I have to force it out of you,” he said, heading off to the north to see if he could find her scent again.

Chevalier found a few broken branches and smelled them. There was still no sign of Emily or Allen, just a horribly strong smell that assaulted his acute senses and made him recoil from the branch. Having no other options, he followed the broken branches until his eye caught something on a bush. He reached down and picked up a banana peel. He smelled it and again caught the stench.

“Mark?” he called, and waited for the heku to arrive.

“Yes, Sir?” Mark asked, walking up to the Elder.

“She’s masked her scent with this,” he said, holding out the banana peel. Mark smelled the peel and dropped it, his nose wrinkled.

“That’s awful.”

“Yes but it’s working. It’s coming from those yellow flowers that are all over the island. Now we’re tracking a smell that is everywhere,” he sighed.

Mark winced, “How do we track that?”

“We don’t,” Chevalier hissed. “Tell me what happened. It had to have been bad for Emily to go to these extremes.”

Mark looked squarely at the Elder, “You can punish me after we find her, but I’m not saying a thing.”

Night fell on the island and a strong wind came up from the ocean, making tracking nearly impossible. Chevalier could hear the heku around him calling for Emily. He hoped she would hear them and try to ash one, then they could at least know a general location.

Emily curled up next to Allen under the small overhang. The wind was fierce and she felt the toddler shiver in the cold. She unbuttoned her shirt, and pulled him close to her, wrapping it around him so her body could keep him warm. They had grown used to the smell, and there were enough flowers around that they could keep themselves covered. The nectar turned sticky after a few hours, and after lying on the dirt floor, both of them were brown from the gooey mud. She hoped that would help them, a kind of camouflage.

She cringed as her stomach growled. They had so few bananas that she hadn’t eaten since she left the cave three days before. Allen complained, but she rationed him to two a day. She hoped the wind might knock

some more down off of the high branches. There was a fresh stream nearby that poured directly into the ocean, now they just needed more food.

Emily hadn't been able to sleep. She spent the nights holding onto Allen and listening to the sounds of the trees. As soon as she started to drift off, she would hear a twig break or a bird chirp and the fear would keep her awake. During the day, they played different games Emily would make up with twigs and rocks. Allen asked often why they couldn't go back to Kralen, but she had no good explanation for his young understanding.

"Emmmmily," she heard a heku yell in the distance.

Emily's body tensed and she reached over to cover Allen's mouth as he stirred. Her heart pounded in her chest, and she fought to control her breathing, unsure if they could pick up her trace from it. She wasn't surprised they came looking for her, but she couldn't risk letting them know where they were. She was on an island full of thirsty heku.

"Emmmmily, we're rescued!" she heard another voice call from far away. A ruse, she was sure, a ploy to get her to reveal her location, and it wasn't going to work. She felt Allen wake up and try to talk, but she kept her hand over his mouth and softly shushed him.

Allen fell back asleep and Emily heard no other voices through the rest of the night. She jumped several times as she heard noises nearby. When the sun came up, she sat up stiffly and looked around the tiny area. She cursed herself for not seeking better shelter, but at the time, this was all she could see. A rock overhang kept them from the sun and rain, but it wasn't as hidden as she first thought it was.

When Allen woke up, she handed him a banana, "You stay here, ok?"

He nodded.

"Promise me, don't move at all," she whispered.

Again Allen nodded.

"Stay here and I'll give you another banana," she promised, smiling at him and trying to sound as calm as she could.

After she was sure he would stay, she crawled out of the safety of the overhang and into the trees. She hoped that on her knees, she wouldn't be seen if the heku were close by. The stream suddenly seemed too far away as she crouched low in the brush and tried to get to it quickly. Emily froze when she heard footsteps just on the other side of a row of bushes. She fell flat against the ground and listened.

“We haven’t seen anything since the footprints on the north beach,” one of the heku said.

“Keep looking,” Kyle replied, and she heard them walk off away from her.

She waited a few minutes and then finally made it to the stream. She slipped off her shirt and dipped it into the water, soaking it. The trip back to Allen seemed to take forever, and she was relieved when she saw him sitting where she told him to stay. He was building something out of the remaining bananas.

“Mommy!” he shouted, and she quickly went to him.

“Shhhhh, Allen, we have to whisper,” she said, quietly.

Allen tilted his head back and opened his mouth as she squeezed the water from her shirt into it. He drank until the shirt was no longer full of water, and then she pulled on the cold shirt. Her fingers ran across the Equites crest on the pocket and her heart sank. She wondered if she would ever see Chevalier again, if she would see the palace or the stables.

“Emily!” she heard someone call from above her on the cliff. She quickly covered Allen’s mouth and looked up. Whoever was calling her was standing on the rock outcropping over their heads. She held her

breath and wondered if she should ash him. It sounded like Kralen, but she couldn't be sure. She knew if she ashed him, she would have to kill him. A warning would only tell the others her location.

She heard more footsteps on the rocks above her.

"I thought I smelled something, but now it's gone," the voice said.

"Was it her?" Kyle asked, and she heard him walk to the edge of the outcropping.

"It was Allen, very faint, but as I said… now it's gone."

"Bring the others here. I want this area searched. Make sure every rock is turned and every tree is checked. She has to be here somewhere," Kyle snapped.

"Yes, Sir. Will you tell him or shall I?"

Emily frowned and looked up.

"I'll tell him, he'll want to try to call for her," Kyle responded, and both of the heku took off.

Emily wondered who they were going to tell. She tried not to think that it might be Chevalier. She didn't want to get her hopes up that it might all be over soon.

She lifted her hand off of Allen's mouth and warned him not to talk. He whispered softly to her that he needed to go to the bathroom. Emily cringed, she'd been able to cover their bathroom visits with the flowers, but the heku were too close, she couldn't risk them catching Allen's scent.

"Can you hold it?" she whispered into his ear.

He shook his head.

"Please, try Baby," she whispered to him, and he nodded. She knew he couldn't hold it for long, and she could still hear far away voices and the crack of twigs as someone walked over them.

Emily gasped when she felt the wetness on Allen's shorts. She immediately heard the voices in the distance stop, and the footsteps came closer. She grabbed Allen tightly and began to run away from them. She knew she couldn't outrun a heku, but had to try. They were getting closer to her. She knew that now they could hear her as she ran through the brush. The sharp twigs cut into her legs and the smell of blood made tracking her even easier.

"Emily stop," she heard Kyle say from right behind her. She put Allen on the ground and turned around, blocking him from view.

"Get away from me," she said sharply.

Kyle didn't move any further, "I'm sorry, there's no excuse for what I did, but we're rescued. We can get off this island."

"Nice try," she said, watching him closely.

"Just wait a few minutes… Chevalier is on his way."

"I don't believe you," she said, before picking Allen up and walking backwards.

"Please, I'm asking for two minutes," Kyle glanced behind him.

"No," she said, as she continuing to back away.

"I can hear him, he's close now. You don't have to worry about me, as soon as he finds out, he'll have me killed," Kyle said to her sadly.

"He doesn't know?" she asked, and frowned.

"No, not yet."

"Then he's not here," Emily said, and finally turned her back to him and ran through the trees, clutching Allen against her chest.

She felt an arm against her shoulder and spun quickly to face Mark, "Don't touch me."

He pulled his hand back, "Just wait Emily, the Elder is coming."

“You too? Are you all in on it now? I can’t feed all of you,” she said, angrily.

Mark frowned, “We know what Kyle did, but the rest of us aren’t going to hurt you.”

She studied his eyes, “If Chevalier is really here, then how does he not know?”

“We’re a unit, a team, and we stick together. None of us are proud of what the Captain did, but we don’t want him dead,” Mark explained.

“I’m leaving now. If you follow me, I won’t have a choice but to turn you to ash,” she said, and turned around, quickly breaking into a run. Her arms ached from carrying Allen, but she couldn’t stop, they were on her trail and it was going to take a miracle to elude them again.

“Emily,” she heard it and froze, it was Chevalier’s voice. She was afraid to turn around, afraid this was just another dream.

“It’s ok,” she heard him say softly. She squeezed her eyes shut. She didn’t want this dream to end.

“Daddy!” Allen yelled, and squirmed to get free of Emily’s grasp. She couldn’t let go of him yet, couldn’t believe this was almost over.

Emily took a deep breath and slowly turned around. Her knees gave out when she saw him, standing in the trees looking at her. She let go of Allen, and he ran to Chevalier as her knees hit the soft moss. Chevalier took Allen in his arms and hugged him, wincing slightly at the smell of nectar that covered him.

"You're really here," she whispered, watching him from the ground.

Chevalier put Allen down and took a step toward her, "Let's go, Em."

He put his hand out to her, but she didn't move. She just looked at him and frowned, "Is this a dream?"

He smiled, "No, this isn't a dream."

Chevalier watched her as she knelt on the moss and he quickly checked her over. She had dark circles under her eyes from not sleeping, and he could smell the fresh blood from the cuts on her legs. She wore one of the Cavalry issued shirts with the sleeves rolled up. Her hair and skin were caked in the awful smelling nectar, which also turned her skin a yellowish hue. He couldn't help but notice she'd gotten thinner. The bones in her wrists and her collar bone stuck out from tight skin.

"I need you to calm down, ok? You need to trust me," he said, taking a step towards her. He'd seen her this afraid before, and it turned out badly, she'd ashed a heku.

Mark appeared in the clearing behind Chevalier, followed shortly by Kralen. Kralen took Allen in his arms and hugged him tightly. Mark moved up by the Elder.

“What did you do to her?” Chevalier hissed at him.

“I didn’t do anything,” he said, and looked at Emily. She was glaring at him.

Emily finally found the strength to get to her feet, and she quickly ran to Chevalier. He wrapped his arms around her tightly, and she buried her face in his chest.

“You smell awful,” he said, amused.

“I know.”

“It was good thinking, if you were hiding from someone,” he said, and turned to Mark.

“Can we just go?” she asked, pulling away from him and taking his hand.

“Sure, we can talk on the way.” He led her south through the trees.

Here with Chevalier, things didn’t seem as bleak as they had for the last few days. What Kyle did seemed less important, and she wondered if it

warranted a death. She hadn't been able to kill him for it, but she knew Chevalier wouldn't hesitate.

"Tell me what happened," he said, watching Kralen carry Allen.

Emily looked up at Mark and then back to Chevalier, "I don't want to talk about it."

He sighed, "Someone is going to tell me, that's a promise."

Emily held tightly to Chevalier's arm as they walked. The heku joined them along the way and by nightfall, everyone was with them except Kyle.

"If I carry you, this will be faster," he said, looking at her. He normally didn't ask to pick her up, but he got the sense from her that she didn't want to be touched.

She nodded and he cradled her in his arms, then blurred toward the south beach where the boat was waiting.

Chevalier carried her onto the boat where Kyle was waiting, "Any reason we can't leave right away?"

"None at all," Kyle said, eyeing Emily carefully.

He set her down and motioned for the captain to set off.

“I need a shower,” she said, looking around.

“Yes you do,” Chevalier chuckled, and led her down the stairs to a room with a bathroom.

Emily stepped into the bathroom and got the water as hot as she could. She stripped off the dirty and torn white shirt and stepped into the shower. She spent extra time making sure none of the nectar was on her, and then stepped out and wrapped in a towel. She peeked out into the bedroom and saw Chevalier.

“I don’t have any clothes,” she said, embarrassed.

“Oh right,” he replied, then took off his shirt and threw it to her.

Emily came out a short time later. Her hair had taken a while to brush the knots out of, but it was finally smoothed into a long braid. Chevalier’s shirt fit down to her knees and she rolled the sleeves up to her wrists.

“Feel better?” he asked.

Emily nodded, “Allen’s turn.”

“He’s clean already. The smell was stinking up the ship, so Kralen bathed him.” He watched her carefully.

Emily sat down on the bed and pulled the covers up. She was still cold.

“What happened?” Chevalier asked, and moved closer to her.

“I can’t… I can’t talk about it.” She was avoiding his eyes.

“I will find out,” he said, and she nodded. “Who tore your shirt?”

Emily shrugged, she wasn’t sure how he found out about that. Chevalier pulled her bikini top from his pocket and held it out to her. She took it and put it on the bedside table.

“It would help if you told me,” he said, touching her cheek softly.

“I can’t,” she whispered.

“I’m starting to form a picture in my head,” he told her, and lightly ran his thumb along the healing wounds on her neck.

She jerked away from him, and pulled the collar of her shirt up to cover her neck.

“Who was it?” he asked, softly.

“I can’t,” she repeated in a whisper.

Mark knocked on the door and then stepped in with a plate, “I tried my hand at peanut butter and jelly.”

“Give it to Allen,” she told him.

“He already has one… this is yours.”

Emily took the plate from him and began to eat quickly. The simple sandwich was perfect and she finished it.

Mark took the plate, “Do you want another one?”

“No, thank you.”

Mark went to leave, but Chevalier shut the door before he could.

“Have a seat, Mark,” Chevalier said, pointing to a chair.

Mark sat down nervously, “Yes, Sir?”

“Spill it,” Chevalier said, sitting in a chair across from Mark.

“What is it you want to know?”

“What happened to Emily. Why her clothes were torn. Why there are bite marks on her neck.”

“I don’t know for sure, Sir,” Mark said, and looked at Emily.

“Then tell me what you do know.”

Mark sighed, “Sir, it’s not my place…”

Chevalier hissed at him, “I’m ordering you to tell me what you do know.”

Mark looked at Emily nervously.

“Don’t, Chev,” she said, hoping he would let Mark off the hook.

He hissed, “Tell me.”

“I don’t want him to tell you,” she said, slipping out of bed to stand by Mark.

“Then you tell me.” He looked up at her.

She shook her head, “Please don’t, not now.”

“If the Lady doesn’t want me to say anything, then I won’t. You can kill me if you wish,” Mark said, softly.

“Get out,” Chevalier ordered, angrily.

Mark blurred out of the room, and the door slammed behind him.

Emily climbed back into bed. The food and the hot shower made it hard to stay awake. She curled up on her side, ignoring the way Chevalier was sulking in the chair. Soon, she was fast asleep.

The heku were after her. She held onto Allen tightly and ran through the forest. She could hear them getting closer. Allen kept sliding further

and further out of her arms until he was gone. She stopped running and searched through the tall grass for him.

She stopped when she saw Kyle waiting for her. He was sitting on a blanket, motioning for her to come to him.

"No, Kyle," she said, and turned, still looking for Allen. She finally found him in the hands of Kralen. The heku's teeth were sunk into Allen's soft flesh.

She ran as Kyle tried to grab her. She knew he didn't just want to quench his thirst, and her legs felt like molasses as she ran toward the beach.

"Emily," she heard the soft voice and jerked awake. She sat up quickly and looked around the strange room.

"You were having a nightmare," Chevalier said, holding her against him.

She laid her head against his chest and held onto his arms. Her body tensed when someone knocked softly on the door.

"Who is it?" Chevalier asked.

"It's Kyle."

Emily wanted to ask Chevalier not to let him into the room. She wanted him far away from her.

“Come in,” he said, and watched Kyle enter.

Kyle looked at Emily and then back to his Elder, “I came to confess. You don’t have to threaten the guards.”

“You came to confess?” Chevalier asked, curiously.

“Yes,” Kyle stood in the corner of the room with his hands grasped in front of him.

“I’m not going to let you cover up for someone else’s mistakes,” Chevalier told him.

Emily looked at the bedspread, “He’s not.”

Chevalier stood up and stepped toward Kyle, his voice now furious, “What did you do?”

“I love her,” Kyle finally admitted.

“I already knew that, but it doesn’t tell me what you did,” Chevalier said, now only a foot from Kyle.

“She was so sick for a while, a fever and the sun burns. I took care of her,” he said, watching Emily.

“And?”

“She was lonely and frail on the island. She just had on that shirt and when she slept… she’s so beautiful,” he continued. Emily blushed and looked away from him.

“Who tore her shirt?”

“I did.”

“Off of her?”

He flinched at the anger in Chevalier’s voice, “Yes.”

“Keep going.”

Emily sat still while Kyle told Chevalier everything that happened. He explained how his troops stood up to him for her, and she suddenly felt guilty for having run off with Allen. She risked a glance up at Chevalier and saw his body in a crouch, his hands balled into tight fists.

“Mark,” Chevalier called.

“Yes, Sir,” Mark said, looking at Kyle.

“Take him… I’ll deal with him when we get back to the palace’s interrogation chamber,” he said, seething.

Mark took Kyle’s arm, but Chevalier stopped him.

“What did you see?” he asked.

Mark looked at Kyle, who nodded, “We saw Lady Emily come back from a walk. She didn’t have a shirt on, she was just holding it against herself. There were… bite marks on her neck that were still bleeding. She wouldn’t talk to us. She just put on a shirt and took Allen, threatening to turn us to ash if we followed.”

“Nothing else?” Chevalier hissed.

“No, Sir,” Mark said, and when Chevalier moved out of the way, Mark took Kyle out roughly and shut the door behind them.

Emily felt his eyes on her, and though she knew it hadn’t been her fault, she felt ashamed.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered.

“Do not apologize for his actions,” Chevalier growled, making Emily flinch.

“He’s kissed me before,” she said, still watching the covers.

“When? How many times?” Chevalier was suddenly standing beside her.

“I told him to stop, and he did… until…”

“Until he had you alone on a deserted island.”

Emily nodded, she was too ashamed to even look up at him.

Chevalier growled deeply and blurred from the room, slamming the door hard behind him. Emily buried her face in her hands and took some time to calm her nerves. She heard a loud crash coming from the bow of the ship and she flinched. She stood up slowly and walked up the stairs onto the deck.

The deck chairs were strewn about, some of them shattered into small pieces. The heku guards were standing along the railings, unmoving. Emily turned to see what they were watching, and she gasped. Chevalier was tearing the boat apart, ripping doors from the hinges and smashing things against the walls.

Emily ran to stop him, but a hand reached out and grabbed her around the waist.

“It’s not safe,” Mark said to her.

“Let me go, I caused this,” she said, pulling against his hand.

“Stay with us, trust me.”

“You didn’t cause this,” Kralen whispered.

“Where is Kyle?” she asked, afraid he was already dead.

“He’s in the cargo hold. The Elder wants him tried before the Council,” Kralen answered.

Emily looked around the boat and into the empty helm’s room, “Where’s the Captain?”

Mark shook his head, “It was fast.”

She gasped, “Chevalier killed him?”

“Yes”

“Why?”

“He tried to calm the Elder down. Right now we all need to just stay away from him,” Mark said, watching the destruction.

Emily pulled at Mark’s fingers, “Let me go.”

“Don’t do it,” he warned her, and let go.

Emily walked slowly up the stairs to the top deck where Chevalier was. He had just torn a door from the hinges and thrown it overboard when she touched him lightly on the shoulder. He spun towards her, his face furious.

“Chev?” she asked, looking into his eyes.

His posture changed, it softened slightly, “Get back downstairs.”

“Please, come with me,” she said, taking his hands. She smoothed his fingers out of the tight fist.

“He’s going to pay for this,” Chevalier hissed.

“I know,” she said, pulling him toward the stairs.

His entire body was shaking furiously.

“You’re scaring me,” she told him, watching him carefully.

“I trusted him with you, implicitly.”

Emily took his other hand and walked down the stairs past the terrified guards. She sat down on the bed and watched him lean the door against the door frame.

“Did he hurt you?” Chevalier asked, sitting beside her as his eyes scanned her body again.

“No, when he bit me I... you know.”

“No I don’t know, what?” he asked.

“I ashed him, but I didn’t want to kill him. I just knocked him unconscious so I could get away,” she said, rubbing his arm lightly.

“That’s a lot of control. Why didn’t you do it when he… tried to… when he…” He shut his eyes against the image.

“I didn’t think he would do that,” she whispered. “I trusted him, too.”

“Even though he’s kissed you before?”

“Yes, because when I told him to stop, he always did.” She stifled a yawn and looked over at the clock, it was 4am.

“Sleep, you look tired,” he said, kissing her forehead.

“Stay with me,” she asked, and slipped under the covers.

He nodded and shut out the light.

Chapter 5 - Trial

It’d been a month since they got back from the deserted island, and Emily waited patiently for them to try Kyle. The date was finally set and it was rumored that she would testify, even though she refused at first.

The Council gathered in their seats with a gloom, and the lights were dimmed. It was troubled times when they had to bring one of their highest ranking guards into a trial. The seats down below them were filled with heku from the guard staff and the town. There were three empty chairs sitting out in front of the rest, facing the Council.

“Derrick, bring in the accused,” Leonid said to the door guard.

The door opened and Kyle stepped in, still wearing his Captain’s uniform. His hands were bound in front of him, and he walked over to the chairs and sat down on the left-hand seat.

“The guards present on the island will be represented by Mark, bring him in,” Leonid said, watching Kyle closely.

Mark walked in wearing his official uniform, with his head held high. He sat in the middle chair.

Leonid turned to Elder Chevalier, “Do you wish for Lady Emily to be present for this?”

Chevalier nodded.

“Bring in Lady Emily,” Leonid said, and watched the guard open the door. Emily walked in and looked around. She didn’t realize how many were going to be present for this. She didn’t want this many heku to

know what happened. She was wearing the blue slip dress Margaret had made for her, and it suddenly felt cold in the room.

“Please, take a seat,” the guard at the door whispered to her.

Emily looked one more time at the crowd, and then walked in to sit down by Mark. She crossed her ankles and laid her hands in her lap.

“We will proceed if there are no objections,” Maleth said, and looked at Emily when she raised her hand. “Yes, Emily?”

Emily stood up, blushing, and walked to Maleth. He leaned down and she whispered into his ear, softly enough that the rest of the heku couldn’t make out her words.

He stood back up and waited until she sat down again, “This is now a closed trial. If you have no part of this, you will leave immediately.”

Emily watched her hands in her lap as the heku from the audience filed out of the council chambers. When the last of the audience was gone, Maleth stood up again.

“Are there any other requests?” he asked the three of them left.

“I call for a conflict of interest,” Kyle said to Maleth.

“On what grounds?”

“On the grounds that Elder Chevalier’s wife is involved. I ask that he not be present.”

Emily tensed and looked up nervously at Chevalier. He was glaring coldly at Kyle.

The council members nodded in succession and Chevalier got up angrily, slamming his chair against the back wall as he left the room.

Emily watched him go and then looked at the Council fearfully.

Maleth smiled at her reassuringly, “He won’t be far, Dear.”

She nodded.

“Shall we proceed?” Maleth asked again, and this time, no one said anything.

“These proceedings will cover the two charges filed against Kyle. The first is attempted rape.” He hesitated as Emily winced, “The other is feeding without permission of the donor. How do you plead?”

Kyle stood, “Not guilty to the first charge and guilty to the second.”

Mark looked up at him, shocked.

“Very well,” Maleth said. “Let’s take the first offense. Lady Emily, please tell us in her own words what happened.”

Emily shook her head. She could feel tears welling up in her eyes as she stared at her hands.

Leonid grinned slightly. It wasn't often that someone told an elder no.

Maleth frowned, "Emily, we need an account so we can decide."

"Don't make her testify," Kyle said angrily.

"You will not speak until spoken to. Lady Emily, please approach the Council," Maleth said, sitting down.

Emily stood up and walked toward the Council.

"Child, you are safe here," he said to her, and she nodded.

"Are you afraid with Kyle in the room?" Leonid asked her softly, and she shook her head.

"Are you embarrassed? We are all friends here," one of the council members asked.

Emily shook her head.

Maleth thought for a moment and then gasped, "Are you ashamed?"

Emily nodded and fought back the tears in her eyes.

“Come up here, Child,” Leonid said, and then watched her as she walked up to the Elder’s seat.

He took her hand as she knelt down beside him, “There is nothing to be ashamed of. We just need to know what happened so we can correctly judge him.”

A tear streamed down Emily’s cheek.

“Tell me, Child, just me,” Leonid smiled at her.

She finally nodded and looked down at Kyle. He looked away from her gaze.

“I was sitting alone.”

“No guards around?”

“No, I needed to be alone,” she said, and looked back at Kyle.

“Go ahead.”

“Kyle came and he… he started to kiss me. He wouldn’t stop.” Leonid could tell by her eyes that she was picturing it all in her mind, “He laid me down. He was so heavy, I couldn’t get up and my hands… he had them trapped above my head.”

Leonid brushed a tear from her cheek with his soft finger. She looked into his eyes and saw that he truly cared. She could see that he wasn't judging her.

"He tore… my shirt off." She slowly wrapped her arms around herself, "He was still kissing me… then he… he took off my bikini top, too. He was… just kissing my neck and then, I could feel his teeth."

"That's enough, Child. We know the rest," he said, and touched her shoulder lightly. "Thank you."

Emily stood up on shaky legs and walked back down to her chair and sat down. Leonid took a moment to regain his composure and stood up.

"I have heard the testimony of the victim. Now you will have time to appeal your case," he said, looking down at Kyle.

Kyle stood up, glanced at Emily, and then at the Council, "It's not how it sounds. I love her."

Damon spoke up, "You love the Elder's wife?"

"Yes," Kyle said, standing tall.

"For how long?"

"Since I met her on the ranch in Montana."

Leonid held a hand up to stop Damon, “So love was it? Did she ask you to stop?”

He nodded, “Yes, but it was because she is afraid of Chevalier, not because the feelings aren’t mutual.”

Emily gasped and looked at Leonid, who smiled at her, “The reasons don’t matter. Did she say to stop?”

“Yes,” Kyle said to Emily.

“Did you forcibly remove her clothing?” Leonid asked him.

Kyle simply nodded.

“That was out of love also?”

“No, by that time things had gotten out of control,” Kyle said, softly.

“Do you still plead not-guilty?”

“I do.”

“How so? It seems to me like you were moments from committing ra…” He hesitated when he saw Emily flinch, “committing an assault.”

“I was trying to free her,” Kyle explained.

“Free her from what?”

“From the Elder, he uses her. She’s so afraid of him that she can’t feel anything for anyone else. He also abuses her. I’ve seen bruises on her numerous times, and it’s all to control her,” Kyle said, ignoring how the council members whispered to one another.

“We still don’t see how that gives you the right to force yourself on her,” Maleth said, angrily.

“I agree, that was wrong of me, but it wasn’t rape… it wouldn’t have gotten that far,” he said, trying to defend himself.

“But you had already undressed her.”

Emily felt her blush rising. She just wanted to get out of this room. Hoping she could make a clean break, she stood quickly and lifted the edge of her dress slightly as she ran to the trial area door. The door guard blocked her way, even when she tried to push him aside.

Emily spun when she felt a hand on her shoulder.

“It’s ok,” Leonid said, softly. “Come…”

Emily glanced at the Council, and then let Leonid lead her back to her seat. He returned to the Council area and smiled at her reassuringly.

“But you already undressed her,” Maleth repeated.

“Mostly, yes.”

“With her hands restrained.”

“Yes, but you have to understand. I love her, and it’s killing me to see the way he treats her, like a piece of property. He is incapable of love and I thought… I thought if she had the chance to break the bond… with me… I could set her free,” Kyle said, and looked back at Emily.

“Did she, at any time, return your feelings that day?” Maleth asked.

“She hadn’t yet.”

“Yet?”

“Yet… if she wasn’t so afraid… of Chevalier, she would have.”

“We will consider the accusations against the Elder later… for now we, as a Council, don’t see how you can justify what you did. Lady Emily clearly stated she wanted you to stop,” Damon growled.

Leonid stood back up, “You do not deny the charges of feeding off of her without permission?”

“No, I do not.” He dropped his eyes.

“Was this during the r… erm… first act?”

He nodded.

“We understand it had been a long time since any of you fed, but that still doesn’t excuse feeding without asking permission.”

“I had my reasons,” he said to the Council.

“They better be good,” Leonid said.

“Em isn’t… well, she can’t be controlled like other mortals… unless… well unless she’s been weakened by blood loss or if she’s ill.”

“Do not call her Em, she’s Lady Emily,” Damon hissed at Kyle.

“You hoped to weaken her through blood loss, so you could control her into going along with your plans?” Maleth asked, shocked.

“No… if I could control her, I could make her understand how much better I am for her.”

“You wanted her to admit that the Elder... abuses her, as you say?” Leonid tried to understand his reasoning.

“Yes,” Kyle answered.

“Why did you stop then?” Maleth asked.

“She… used her powers on me,” Kyle said, again looking at the floor.

“Then who revived you from ash?”

“No one, she just did it until I fell unconscious.”

“You can control it that well, Lady Emily?” Maleth asked, impressed.

Emily nodded.

“Very well… we call on our witness,” Leonid interjected after some silence.

Mark stood up.

“You are representing the thirteen heku from the island, are you not?” he asked.

“Yes, I am.”

“Did you observe signs that Lady Emily had been attacked?”

“Yes”

“How so?”

“When she came into the cave, she was afraid, and we saw bite marks on her neck that were bleeding. Then there was… well she didn’t have a shirt on, she had a torn shirt held up against her,” Mark said, watching the Council.

“Did she tell you what had happened?”

“No, she did not. She put on a new shirt and then took Allen and ran.”

“Did you follow her?”

“No, Sir. She threatened to turn us to ash if we followed her,” Mark said, giving Emily a crooked smile.

“When did Kyle return?” Leonid continued.

“Twenty minutes later, he came in, obviously in pain.”

“What did he say?”

“He wanted us to go find her,” Mark replied.

“Did you?”

“No, we told him we wouldn’t go find her so he could…” Mark sighed, “Do whatever he wanted with her.”

“Is there anything else?”

“No, Sir, that is all,” Mark said, and sat back down.

“The Council will now deliberate. Lady Emily, please approach the Council again.” Emily looked up, then stood, and walked to them.

Maleth leaned over to her, “Dear, do you wish Elder Chevalier to return or would you rather him stay away? We still have the accusations that he may be mistreating you.”

“Please, bring him back,” she said, adamantly. “I’m not abused.”

“Are you speaking out of fear, Child?”

She shook her head, “No, I’m not afraid of him.”

Maleth nodded and stood as the Council filed out of the council chambers through the back door. The side door opened and Chevalier stepped in. Emily ran into his arms and he wrapped them around her and kissed the top of her head. He watched as a guard escorted Kyle from the room. Kyle was glaring icily at the Elder.

“It’s ok, it’s over,” he said to Emily.

She nodded and pulled closer to him.

“Elder?” Mark said from behind Emily.

Chevalier looked up at him.

“I think you should know, Sir. Kyle has accused you of some things the Council will need to follow up on,” Mark said.

“What things?” he asked, surprised.

“He accused you of abusing Lady Emily, and using fear to control her,” Mark said, softly.

“He what?” Chevalier asked, shocked.

Emily nodded against his chest.

“He said he’s seen bruises on her, left by you,” Mark continued.

Chevalier sighed, “Thank you for telling me. I can put that to rest soon enough.”

Mark bowed and left the council chambers.

Emily followed Chevalier up to their room and he excused Allen’s guards. They quickly left and took up their positions outside of the door. Emily sat at the table with Allen as their dinner was delivered. He began to eat, but Emily just pushed the food around.

“Not hungry?” Chevalier asked, putting his hand on her shoulder.

“He’s my friend,” she whispered.

“I know, but he overstepped.”

She nodded and stood up, “I’m just going to go to bed.”

Chevalier sat with Allen as he ate, and then watched Emily crawl into bed and pull the covers up over herself.

Emily felt a hand on her shoulder, “Em, wake up.”

She sat up in bed and looked at Chevalier, “What’s wrong?”

“The Council made a decision. They need us down there,” he said, handing her jeans and a t-shirt.

“I don’t want to go,” she told him, and put the clothes down on the bed.

“You have to. They specifically requested that you return,” he said, pulling the covers off of her.

Emily sighed and dressed quickly. She didn’t want to face Kyle again. She didn’t want to know he was sentenced to death or banishment. She could just picture his withered body lying in a coffin deep beneath the earth, thinking about her for hundreds of years. She caught sight of a clock on the way, it was 3:30am.

Chevalier opened the doors to the council chambers and Emily hesitated before entering. Kyle was already facing the Council as they sat in their chairs high above him. Chevalier kissed her forehead and took his spot with the Council. Emily wasn’t sure where she was supposed to go, so she moved back against the wall and watched.

“We do apologize for this late hour, Lady Emily. It wasn’t until we’d already called to reconvene that we were reminded that you were probably asleep,” Maleth said, smiling.

“It’s ok,” Emily said softly from the shadows in the back of the room. She stifled a yawn and saw Leonid wink at her.

“The Council has decided, and have all agreed, that you are guilty on all charges,” Maleth said to Kyle.

Kyle hissed, “Then I demand he be charged also.” He stared at Chevalier.

“We will address those accusations as soon as we are done with you,” Maleth said, angrily.

“Then do it… what’s the punishment?”

Maleth grabbed a piece of paper, “For crimes against the Elder’s wife, we have sentenced you to life in prison.”

Emily gasped.

“Life in prison? Why not kill me?” he asked, mockingly.

“We talked about it, but feel your time is best served thinking about what you have done, and we are going to set an example of you,” he said, proudly.

A guard came and hauled Kyle away as he struggled against the binds. Two more guards appeared and helped them take Kyle to prison.

“Lady Emily, please step forward,” Leonid motioned for her.

Emily stepped out of the shadows and walked up to toward where Kyle had previously been standing.

“Any time an accusation is brought against a member of the Equites, it must be followed up with an inquisition. You heard the accusations brought against the Elder by Kyle, did you not?”

“I did,” she admitted.

“Has the Elder ever purposely hit you?” Maleth asked, glancing quickly at Chevalier.

“No”

“Has he, as accused, ever left a bruise on you?”

Emily looked at Chevalier and he nodded, “Go ahead, it’s ok.”

She nodded and sunk her hands into her pockets.

“When was the first time?” Maleth asked her.

“In Colorado, we’d gotten into a fight over… well… the coven,” she said, watching the dirt floor.

“Where was the bruise?”

“My neck.”

“He choked you?” Maleth asked, surprised.

Emily didn’t answer.

“Yes, I did,” Chevalier said, watching her.

Maleth nodded, “And the next time?”

“I… I was mad, we’d been fighting again and…” she shrugged, “I burned him.”

Maleth gasped, “You burned him?”

Emily nodded, “So he choked me.”

“Again leaving bruises?”

Emily nodded again.

“Then the next time?”

She looked up at Maleth, “That was it.”

“Elder, do you wish to speak in your defense?”

“Nope, no defense,” he said, casually.

“Will you step out then for a moment?” Leonid asked. Chevalier nodded and stepped out of the chambers, shutting the door behind him.

Emily looked up at the Council.

“Lady Emily, do you fear for your life?” Leonid asked, kindly.

“No”

“Are you afraid of your husband?”

“No”

“It’s very important that you tell us. It’s our job to protect you,” Maleth said.

“I don’t need protected from Chev, I love him. I don’t know where Kyle got off saying he controls me, but he doesn’t. I’ve been abused, and I’ve been controlled before, and it wasn’t by him,” she said, watching them.

“You have nothing else to say? No accusations?”

“None, I just want tonight to end, and I want to go back to Chev,” she said, kicking a clump of dirt on the ground.

“Very well, Child. You may go, but we will be watching you. If we feel harm is coming to you, we will have to act,” Maleth said, and opened the side door for her.

Emily walked out and went over to Chevalier as he leaned against the stairs, “How’d that go?”

“I don’t know. They said they’ll be watching me,” she explained, and headed up the stairs, hand-in-hand with Chevalier.

When Emily woke up, she knew what she had to do, but it would put her in danger and would surely make both her guards and Chevalier angry. She promised to stay and not slip her guards, but just this once, she had to get out. She ate breakfast quickly and got dressed. The Cavalry training was to start at 10am, so she only had a few hours to execute her plan. Sam took Allen without question and Emily threw her hair into a pony tail and walked over to the window. She looked down from the fifth-floor window.

Out to the sides of the window were small ledges. She was pretty sure her feet would fit on them. Further off to the sides were drains coming from the roof. Emily opened the window and looked back to make sure

no one was coming in the door. She was able to shimmy out onto the small ledge while leaning up against the stone building for support. When she got to the drainpipe, she slid down it to the next floor and repeated until her feet were firmly on the ground and her heart could quit pounding. It was by luck alone that she managed that without falling or being seen.

Emily went in the kitchen door, knowing it was abandoned during this time of the day. It was also close to the doorway she needed. She ran down the hallway, pushed the stone, and impatiently waited the four seconds it took for the prison door to open. She shut it behind her and ran, out of breath, down into the prison room.

"Lady Emily, you can't be down here!" one of the guards said, frowning.

"Shhhhh," she said to him, and put her finger to her lips.

He looked around curiously.

"Where's Kyle?" she asked.

"Ma'am, I'm going to have to insist that you go back upstairs. Where are your guards, anyway?" he asked, taking her arm.

"Guarding an empty room… you just touched me," she said, and then grinned, it was perfect.

He jerked his hand away, “Sorry, I’m so sorry.”

She watched as he eyed the other door guard.

“Chevalier gets pretty mad when a heku touches me,” she reminded him, watching as his eyes filled with panic.

“Just go upstairs. I won’t mention you came down here, and we’ll keep the touch to ourselves,” he suggested, almost pleading.

“Deal... but first… where’s Kyle?” She crossed her arms.

The guard sighed, “Fourth row, last cell on the right.”

Emily held out her hand, “His key.”

The guard set his jaw, “No, you aren’t letting him go.”

“I know that… I promise not to let him go. Now give me the key or I’ll tell the Elder you were both savoring me,” she said, raising her eyebrows.

“You wouldn’t!”

“I would.”

He growled and handed her a key. She walked to the fourth row of cells, ignoring the hisses and growls from the heku she passed. When she got to Kyle’s cell, he sat up and looked at her.

“Em, what are you doing here?” he asked, shocked as she opened his door and stepped inside.

She shut the door behind her and turned around. Kyle was now standing, and his eyes were wide.

“You have to get out of here, it’s not safe.”

“Why did you do it?” she asked, sitting on the edge of the bed.

He growled, “Guards! Get her out of the prison.”

“They won’t listen to you. I don’t believe your lame excuse. You are my friend, why did you have to do it?” she asked, and watched him sit down.

“What exactly did I do?” he asked, looking at her curiously.

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t know why I’m here, Em. No one will tell me,” he said, looking around the bars.

She frowned and watched him, “You… wait… what?”

“I’m sure it’s pretty bad. They say I’m in for life, but when I ask why, they just growl and walk away.”

“You were at the trial.”

“I’m sure I was. Tell me please. Don’t make me spend an eternity down here without knowing why.”

“You… you attacked me,” she said, watching his face.

“I wouldn’t do that!”

“After the boat crashed.” She wasn’t sure what was going on, but she didn’t trust him.

Kyle sighed and laid his head in his hands, “I don’t remember the boat crashing.”

“You don’t remember tearing my clothes off?” she asked, surprised.

He looked up at her, “I wouldn’t do that.”

“Or feeding off of me,” she said, and heard a hiss from across the hallway.

“Emily, you have to believe me, I wouldn’t do that. You know I care about you, but I would never do anything to hurt you and I wouldn’t do anything to anger Chevalier.”

“It was you, Kyle. I’m not lying.”

“I don’t doubt it… I don’t know what’s happening. I can’t remember anything since we were out on the boat. Then… I’m here,” he said, looking around the bare cell.

“We need to tell someone then,” Emily said, concerned.

“Don’t do it. You shouldn’t even be down here. Where are your guards?” he asked, looking out the cell toward the hallway.

“Upstairs, I’m guessing,” she said, looking at the floor.

“You promised to stop slipping them.”

“I had to talk to you.”

“Why? If I did the things you said, you shouldn’t be near me.”

“I can’t leave you down here, not if you can’t even remember it,” she said, grabbing the key from her pocket.

He grabbed her wrist, “Don’t, that would cause more problems than you can imagine. You need to stay away from me, do you hear me?”

She shook her head, “I have to do something.”

“You have to stay with your guards and forget about me,” he whispered.

Kyle’s eyes grew wide and he stepped back away from Emily, letting go of her wrist. She turned just as a hand grabbed the collar of her shirt and

she felt the wind as she was thrown against the stone wall of the prison. The force knocked the wind out of her, and she slumped down to the cold floor.

“How dare you touch her,” Chevalier said to Kyle.

“I was just stopping her from letting me out, I swear,” Kyle said.

“After what you’ve done, you shouldn’t even be talking to her,” Chevalier growled.

“I told her to leave. I was trying to get her to go back to her guards,” Kyle said, softly.

“You’re lucky I don’t tear you apart right here.”

Emily heard the cell door slam and a hard hand on her arm hauled her up so she could stand. She winced as Chevalier roughly pulled her from the prison and up the stairs. Her arm was aching by the time they got to the bedroom, and she couldn’t even look at her guards as they passed them. Chevalier slammed the door shut and threw her against the bed.

“What were you doing?” he asked, seething.

Emily tried to rub some feeling back into her arm, “I had to talk to him.”

“You had to? You promised me you would stay with your guards.” Emily was sure she’d never seen him quite this angry. There was a dark shadow across his face, and his furious eyes were deep and swirling.

“I’m sorry, ok? I had to talk to him.”

“What did you have to talk to him about so badly that you’d slip your guards, threaten the door guards in the prison, and actually go into the cell with him?” He took a step toward her, and she crawled back further on the bed.

“Calm down, please,” she said, standing up on the other side of the bed.

“I will not.” He stepped around the bed to face her.

“He doesn’t know what he did.”

“Of course he doesn’t,” he said, and took another step closer to her.

“You have to talk to him, Chev, listen to him. He doesn’t know why he’s in prison.” She took another step away from him, but found her back against the wall.

“Yes he does. He’s just playing off of your fragile mortal emotions.” He gritted his teeth.

“Fragile mortal emotions?”

“He knew you would eventually feel bad for what he did. He’s planned this entire thing. I just can’t believe you were stupid enough to fall for it.”

“I’m not stupid,” Emily glared at him, and she could feel her temper flare.

Chevalier was at her in one step and grabbed her upper arms, picking her up off the floor, “What do I have to do to get a little bit of obedience from you?”

“You’re hurting me,” she said to him, fearfully.

“Tell me… what I have to do to get you to stay with your guards?” he snapped at her, and slammed her roughly against the wall.

Emily screamed when her head hit the wall and she heard the front door open. Chevalier turned to look at the four guards, and then let go of her. She fell to the ground and he blurred out the door.

Mark knelt down and looked into her eyes, “Are you hurt?”

“Get away from me,” she said, trying to stand up, but her knees buckled under her. Mark lifted her up and sat her on the bed.

“Get the doctor,” he ordered.

“No,” she told him, and the heku at the door stopped.

“Emily, something’s wrong,” Mark said to her.

“Get back to your post,” she tried to sound fierce.

“But…”

“Now,” she yelled, sitting up. The guards bowed and returned to their station outside of her door, and shut it behind them.

Emily leaned her pounding head into her hands and took some deep breaths. She did a quick check over her body and other than her headache, a neck pain, and her aching arms, she wasn’t injured. Thinking quickly, she went back out her window. This time she didn’t care who saw her, but she needed two minutes alone with Kyle. The prison guards were shocked when she walked in and she glared at them as she walked by.

“Why are you back here?” Kyle asked, coming to the cell.

“We’re leaving,” she said, digging the keys from her pocket.

“What?”

“I need to get away, please, just come.” Her eyes frantically looked toward the guards.

“Emily, are you ok? Did he hurt you?” he asked, looking at the bruises on her arm.

Emily nodded.

“Tell no one where you’re going. Go, now,” he said, urgently.

Emily hesitated, and then ran up the stairs. When her guards saw her, they gasped. She ignored them and ran into the bedroom.

“Sam, come here,” she yelled, and he appeared from Allen’s room.

“Pack up, we’re getting out of here,” she told him.

Emily dug deep in her bureau and pulled out an envelope. She folded it and put it in her back pocket just as the door opened.

“Are you leaving?” Maleth asked, shutting the door.

“Yes,” she told him.

“I’m sorry. I can’t let you leave.” He was moving toward her.

She looked up at him surprised, “Why not?”

“We need you. Since we’ve seen your abilities, we swore to keep you here under our protection.” He put a hand on her shoulder.

Emily jerked away from him, “You can’t keep me here.”

“I can and I will.” She saw the same dark shadow cross his face that Chevalier had. Maleth took her wrist.

“Let go of me, Maleth. I’m not one of your heku you can boss around.” She tried to get her wrist free, but he only held tighter.

“All we need from you is some obedience.” He looked down at her ominously.

“Let go, don’t make me ash an elder,” she said, angrily.

Maleth brought his hand up quickly, and when the back of his hand connected with her cheek, she flew back several feet and landed hard on the wooden floor. As she got her knees, she could feel the blood trailing down her face.

“Elder?” Mark asked. They heard Emily scream and walked in just in time to see the Elder hit her. The guards weren’t sure what to do, they were her protection, but he was their elder.

Maleth turned and snarled at the guards, giving Emily just enough time to get to her feet and run into Allen’s room.

“Skip packing, we’re leaving,” she whispered to Sam, and then picked Allen up.

Sam grabbed one tiny bag and followed her out into the bedroom. Emily moved past the Elder, and as he tried to grab her, she turned on him.

“Last warning, I can ash you and you know it,” she hissed, and then took off out of the room. She heard footsteps behind her, and turned to see the guards following behind Sam.

“Go away,” she said, turning back down the stairs.

“We’re not leaving you,” Mark told her, still confused about what was going on.

“I’m no longer under the protection of the Equites.” She hit the ground floor and ran, holding Allen close to her.

“You can’t just make us leave,” Mark said from closer to her.

She spun on him, “Mark, I like you, but I will ash you if you don’t turn around now.”

Mark’s eyes grew wide and he put his hand out to stop the other three guards. He watched her leave and then turned back toward the guard house.

Emily opened the door to the massive underground garage. It didn’t take her long to find the black Humvee among all of the sleek sports cars. She tucked Allen into the car seat and slammed it into drive, spinning out

and driving too quickly out of the garage. She didn't even look back until she had hit the Interstate and was cruising along at 80 mph.

"Emily?" Sam asked from her side.

"What?"

"Where are we going?"

"I don't know if I should say," she said, focusing on the road. Her head was pounding and her cheek ached. A quick glance in the rear-view mirror showed the bruise forming.

"I was afraid that someday he would kill you," Sam said, turning to check on Allen.

"Yeah… well it's not just him, this beauty," she said, pointing to her cheek, "was Maleth."

Sam frowned, "But Maleth was always so kind."

"Was"

Emily drove all night, and when she got tired, Sam took over. All he knew was that he was headed for Colorado. Sam pulled into a fast-food restaurant when Allen asked for food, and Emily looked up.

"Where are we?" she asked, slipping on her sunglasses.

“We’re about twenty miles outside of Colorado,” Sam said, and ordered Allen a hamburger.

“Ok, I’ll drive from here,” she told him, and swapped Sam seats. Once Allen was fed, she pulled back onto I-70.

Sam watched the hills turn to mountains and said nothing. He knew asking again wouldn’t get him any information.

Emily turned off of I-70 and headed toward the ski community of Breckenridge. She pulled over and took the envelope from her back pocket. She opened it, hands shaking, and took out a map. She carefully maneuvered past the mansions and ski resorts until she found the snow covered road she was looking for. The Humvee came in handy as they plowed through the abandoned road. She stopped and looked up when the mansion came into view.

“Here we are,” she said, and stopped in front of the mansion. She then pulled a key out of the envelope, “Stay here.”

Emily walked up to the house, slipped the key in the door, and opened it. She soon found the garage and opened the door, waving Sam in. He pulled the Humvee into the garage and she shut the door behind him. There were four other vehicles in the garage, which was perfect. The Equites knew she had the Humvee.

“Where are we?” Sam asked, looking around the foyer.

“Kyle’s house,” she told him, and headed up the stairs to look around.

Sam was shocked, “We’re staying in Kyle’s house?”

“He offered it to me years ago, in case of an emergency. There’s money in here for us too. As soon as things calm down, we’ll buy a ranch.” He noted how her voice cracked at the end.

“Ok,” he whispered.

The mansion wasn’t as large as the one Chevalier had, but it was still too large for the three of them. They each picked out a bedroom and Emily dropped Allen’s bag on the bed, then headed down to the kitchen. It was full of brand new appliances, but no food.

“Sam?” she asked after opening the fridge.

“Yes?”

She handed him several hundred dollars, “Take one of Kyle’s trucks and get some food.”

He nodded and left.

“When’s Daddy coming?” Allen asked, looking around the cold house.

“I don’t know.” She didn’t have the heart to tell him.

Chapter 6 - Breckenridge

“You two have some explaining to do,” Leonid said, glaring at Maleth and Chevalier.

“Explain what?” Maleth asked, shocked that another Elder would talk to him like that.

“Where’s Emily?” Leonid asked Chevalier.

He shrugged, “I’m guessing in her room or in the stables.”

“Are you two insane? Do you not remember?” Leonid asked, frustrated.

“What are you talking about?” Chevalier asked, his eyes narrowing.

“Emily left three days ago in the Humvee,” he reminded them.

“She did what?” both Maleth and Chevalier said together.

“Can you blame her?” Mark said angrily from behind them, and then dropped his eyes. “Sir.”

“Explain yourself,” Chevalier hissed at the guard.

“I’m just saying, if I were her, I would have left too,” he explained.

“Why’s that?”

“I saw, Sir. I saw it all, and you’re lucky you didn’t kill her,” Mark growled.

“What are you talking about? I didn’t almost kill Emily.”

“Slamming her up against a wall isn’t trying to kill her? It may be safe to do that to one of us, but she’s mortal,” Leonid interjected.

“I didn’t slam her against a wall,” Chevalier hissed, and crossed his arms.

“I beg to differ,” Mark said, meeting his eyes. “Then Elder Maleth came in and sealed the deal by backhanding her across the room.”

“I… I did not,” Maleth said, shocked.

“Who told you we did these things?” Chevalier asked, and took a menacing step toward Mark.

“I saw them with my own eyes. At least two of them… it was one of the prison guards that saw you throw her against the prison wall. I just got to see you slam her several times into the bedroom wall,” Mark said, not moving.

“I did no such thing,” Chevalier growled.

“I didn’t hurt the child either,” Maleth said, hurt.

“If you two didn’t, then who did? When she ran out of here, she had blood on her and a bruise forming on her cheek and arm. Too many witnesses placed you two as the assailants,” Leonid said, watching them both.

“That’s insane, and let’s go get her, she can’t be far,” Chevalier said, pushing past Mark.

“Can’t be far? She left three days ago,” Leonid reminded him.

“No she didn’t. I was just with her last night,” He frowned.

Mark shook his head, “She’s been gone for three days.”

“That’s impossible, I was with her last night,” Chevalier said, to Leonid this time.

“Three days,” Leonid agreed, and then thought for a moment. “What day is it?”

“Wednesday,” Chevalier told him.

“It’s Friday.”

Chevalier sat down and looked at Maleth, “When’s the last time you saw her?”

“Yesterday, she was heading down to dinner with Allen,” Maleth said, looking at the guards.

“Three days,” Leonid said again.

“I think you are confused,” Chevalier pulled his phone out of his pocket and dialed.

“Em, where are you?” he asked casually, and then frowned.

“Are you ok?” He winced at her answer and then shut his phone.

“She hung up on me,” he said, looking at them. “Did I really do those things?”

Leonid nodded, “I think we need to talk to Kyle.”

The three elders headed down to Kyle’s cell. He stood up and faced them, “Hello.”

“Kyle, we have a few questions for you,” Maleth said softly. His mind was still reeling with the thought that he may have hit Emily.

“Ok”

“Do you remember your time on the island?” Leonid asked him.

Kyle shook his head, “I didn’t even know I had been on an island until Emily told me.”

“When did you see Emily last?” Chevalier asked.

“Three days ago, right before she left,” Kyle glared at him.

“Was she upset?”

“Are you kidding me? You pulled her out of here by her collar and threw her against the wall. She came back down with bruises on her arm and tried to get me to leave with her. So yeah… I’d say she was upset,” Kyle watched him coldly.

“So it’s true, I did it,” Chevalier said, and he headed back up the stairs.

“What’s going on?” Kyle asked, as Leonid let him out of his cell.

“No one seems to remember what they did to Emily. We need to get to the bottom of this,” Leonid said. “Did she tell you where she was going?”

“No, I told her not to tell anyone,” Kyle told him, not ashamed of what he told her.

Chevalier was already in the Council’s conference room, deep in thought, when the others appeared.

They all sat down and Leonid sighed, “As it seems I’m the only one with a clear memory, we need to figure out what’s going on.”

Chevalier sighed, “She’s gone. I told her that the next time she felt afraid, that I would let her go. I even gave her enough money to buy her own ranch.”

“We just need to figure out what happened and then let her know,” Maleth said, he looked at his hand. He couldn’t imagine hitting a mortal, especially not Emily.

Damon stepped into the chambers and sat down, “You called for me?”

“When’s the last time you saw Emily?” Leonid asked him.

“It was three days ago, just before she left,” Damon explained, and looked around the table.

“Seems there’s a memory problem in our midst,” Leonid told him. “Neither Kyle, nor the Elders, remember assaulting her.”

“She shouldn’t have slipped her guards and gone into the prison,” he said, calmly.

“That’s no reason to be beaten,” Chevalier hissed at him.

Sam handed a small bag down to Emily, “I got you something.”

She looked up from the bathroom floor, “I don’t want anything.”

He pulled out a small box and handed it to her.

Emily looked at the box, and then up to Sam, “It’s the flu, Sam.”

“There are some crackers and 7up on your bedside table,” Sam said, shutting the door.

Emily leaned her head against the cold wall and looked at the box. She hadn’t even considered this to be anything but the flu. She turned the box over in her hand several times, and then threw it against the wall.

She heard the cell phone ring in the bedroom and Sam answered it.

“This is Sam.”

“No, she can’t come to the phone.”

“None of your business.”

“She released me from having to obey you.”

“Yes, I will tell her.”

She heard him click the phone shut, “Are you ok?”

“Yes,” she said, finally managing to get to her feet.

She came out from the bathroom and lay down on the bed, “Feed Allen, I’m going to nap.”

“Did you do it?” he asked, picking Allen up off the floor.

“No, it’s the flu,” she said, and shut her eyes.

“There has to be a connection. It’s no coincidence that those of you closest to Emily were the ones affected,” Damon said, leaning on the table.

“An Encala or Valle attack maybe?” Maleth suggested.

“This did pit the Elders against one another for a few days. It could be that,” Leonid said.

“Or their goal was to get Emily out from under our protection… and it worked,” Chevalier said, and sighed.

“I agree,” Damon said.

“The question is… how did they do it?” Chevalier asked.

“And do they have her?” Kyle asked, looking at Chevalier.

“I don’t know. I’m not getting anything from her,” he said softly.

“Have any Encala or Valle been spotted in the city?” Leonid asked Damon.

“Not since the mortal that Emily knew, but that was a long time ago,” he replied.

“Tim?” Chevalier frowned.

“Yeah, him.”

“A mortal couldn’t do this.”

“Not alone, no.”

“Bring him up here,” Chevalier ordered the guards. The Council’s conference room was quiet while they waited for the guards to bring him up. Tim came in, cowering from the guards, and sat down on the end chair.

“You… you called for me?” Tim asked, looking around at them.

“What did you do?” Chevalier asked, pounding his fist on the table.

Tim jumped, “What?” he asked quickly.

“We know you did something… something that made us do things to Emily to drive her off,” Leonid said, watching Tim carefully.

“I didn’t do anything,” he whispered.

Chevalier brought his fist down on Tim’s hand, and everyone in the room could hear the bones crush. Tim screamed.

“Try again,” Chevalier said, sitting back down.

“I didn’t… I swear,” Tim cried, cradling his hand.

Chevalier began to get up, but Damon beat him to it, “Wrong answer.”

Damon quickly reached out to Tim and pulled his arm out of the socket. It dangled limply at his side as he screamed again.

“It’s not me… I promise… it’s the Encala,” Tim said, crying.

“What are they doing?” Leonid asked him.

“I don’t know. They sent me in to see who was closest to Emily... That’s all I know,” he said, as tears streamed down his face.

“So you are in on it. Who do you report to?” Damon asked, and purposely bumped his limp arm.

“Stop, stop, I’ll tell you everything.” Tim said, groaning.

“Start talking, Boy,” Maleth hissed.

“They have a mind controller… but they needed to know who she was closest too. I was to tell them when she left, so then they could pick her up,” Tim said, watching the floor and speaking through sobs.

“Did you do it? Did you tell them when she left?” Damon asked.

Tim nodded, “I had to, or they would kill me.”

“Who did you tell?”

“The Encala Elders.”

Damon blurred behind Tim and wrenched his neck to the side, easily killing him. Tim’s body fell to the floor of the conference room.

“Call the Encala Elders here, tonight,” Chevalier said, slamming his chair against the wall as he stood. “Kyle, call Alec, see if Emily is there.”

“She won’t go back there. She knows we would check,” Kyle said, deep in thought.

“Then where else can she be?” he asked.

“You gave her the money to buy a ranch, maybe she has it already,” Kyle suggested.

“No, I put more money in there last week and the full amount was there. It takes time to buy a ranch.” Chevalier narrowed his eyes, “Let me see how much is in there now.”

“You promised her…” Kyle said, and then stopped.

Chevalier dialed a number and after a few minutes hung up, “The full amount is there, so she’s not at a hotel unless she has money elsewhere.”

“Sam,” Emily called from the bathroom floor.

“Yes, Emily?” he asked, opening it slowly.

“Here’s your damn test,” she told him, throwing the blue plastic stick to him. He caught it and looked at it for a few seconds.

“I’m sorry,” he said, and tossed it into the trash.

“I don’t need this right now. I don’t need to be pregnant while I try to set up a new life,” she told him, slipping down the wall onto the floor.

“I know,” he whispered, and watched her. He sighed when the phone in his pocket rang. For the past few weeks they had been in Kyle’s house, it had gone off several times a day

“Let me have it,” Emily said, reaching her hand out. She hadn’t spoken to anyone from the palace since Chevalier’s first call, so she thought she’d give Sam a break. He handed the phone to her.

“What?”

“Emily?” Chevalier asked, surprised.

“Who were you expecting?”

“You sound like something’s wrong, tell me,” he said, concerned.

“Why did you call?”

“You have to listen to me, Em. We were being controlled by the Encala. We didn’t hurt you, I swear. Kyle is out of jail too, that wasn’t him,” he spoke as fast as he could, before she could hang up.

“Nice try, don’t you get it? I’m tired of it… the attacks, the bites, being watched, and chastised like a child when I need to get away,” she explained.

“I know, but we can work it out.”

“It’s too late. Do you know how many times I’ve been hit since I left? None… and how many times someone’s bitten me since I left? None.”

“Please, Emily, I love you.”

She squeezed her eyes together, “I know,” she said, her voice cracking, “But it’s over. I can’t do it anymore.”

“We can change,” he said, desperately. She clicked the phone shut and leaned her head back. Sam left quietly and went out to the living room to play with Allen.

Emily came out a short time later with crackers. She handed one to Allen, and then sat down on the couch to eat the other one.

“We could get rid of it,” Sam said, watching her.

“What?” she asked, looking at him.

“The baby.”

She sighed, “I can’t do that.”

“I figured.” He then turned into a cat and pawed at Allen playfully.

“We don’t know what you’re talking about and are offended by the idea of it,” the Encala Elder said. They sent only one Elder and three of his guards.

“We already know you did it. Your weak mortal pawn told us that. What we need to know is how,” Damon said, looking down at him.

“I won’t stand here and be insulted.” The Encala Elder turned for the door.

“You do realize you aren’t leaving here until we get what we want,” Damon said, as the room filled with the Cavalry.

He spun toward the Council, “You can’t hold me here.”

“We can. You broke all rules when you controlled us to gain access to the Winchester,” Maleth told him angrily.

“Oh? Is she gone then?” the Encala Elder smiled.

“No, we stopped her, but we know what your plans were,” Damon told him.

“She’s not here.” He grinned, “We are watching her closely.”

“That’s a lie,” Chevalier said. “If you know where she is, you would have her already. You wouldn’t stand by and watch her.”

“Believe what you want,” he said. The Encala turned to leave, but was stopped by the strong hands of the Cavalry.

“Let us know when you are ready to talk,” Damon said, and nodded. The Cavalry roughly forced the Encala out of the room and into prison cells.

“After the interrogation room, flood light into their cell. I don’t want them seeing darkness,” Chevalier ordered, and then stood up and left the room. He hadn’t been back to their bedroom yet, and he hesitated outside of the door.

As he walked in, he noticed how quiet and cold the room seemed. Emily’s things were scattered around the room, her suitcase, half packed, was still sitting on the bed. He picked up her sweater and held it in his hands, feeling the softness of it and he could pick up a trace of her scent.

Sitting on the bed, Chevalier reached out for her and again felt nothing. He wasn’t sure why he couldn’t tell how she felt, but the silence was foreign to him and he growled.

“Emily, I brought you some breakfast,” Sam said, walking into the dark room.

“I’m not hungry,” she said from under the covers.

“You haven’t gotten out of bed in four days. You can’t hide.”

“Just leave,” she said, and sighed when the phone rang again.

“Sam here,” he said, answering.

“Emily,” He turned to her, “It’s Kyle.”

A hand shot out from under the covers and he handed her the phone, “When will you stop calling us?”

“Emily, are you ok?”

“Yes”

“You sound sick.”

“Thanks”

Kyle paused, “Chevalier is telling the truth. Remember when I told you in the prison that I couldn’t remember the island? It also happened to him and Maleth.”

“Even if I believed you, it wouldn’t matter. I can’t live with the heku anymore. I can’t be trapped, and watched, and monitored.”

“We’ve talked about that, and it will be different, I promise.”

“You say that now, but the next time I’m attacked, it will all come back. Don’t you realize how much easier life at the palace will be without me?”

“I know how boring it will be.”

“Good-bye, Kyle,” she said, and hung up the phone. She felt guilty. She was in his house, using his money, and couldn’t even tell him where she was.

“Emily, I’m going into town for some supplies. Do you need anything?” Sam asked.

“Yes, I need some shoes. I still don’t have any… and some clothes. I can’t keep wearing Kyle’s shirts around,” she said, sitting up, “We need to start looking for a ranch.”

Sam smiled, he was glad to see her out of bed, “I’ll take Allen. He’s getting cabin fever.”

She nodded and headed in to take a long, hot shower. When she got out of the bathroom, she saw new jeans and t-shirts on the bed. She slipped into them and went downstairs, where Sam was looking through the paper.

“Find anything?” she asked, sitting down with a glass of 7-up.

“There’s some ranch property in Montana,” he said, looking up.

She shook her head, “I don’t want memories, no Montana, no Maine, and no Colorado.”

Sam frowned, “Morning sickness still bad?”

“Yeah, I guess, same as last time. What about Texas?”

He thumbed through the newspaper, “Wow, there’s a lot of property for sale in Texas. What’s our price range?”

“I don’t really know. I can call and find out,” she said, grabbing the envelope from the table and pulling out a bank card. She called the number, entered more numbers, and gasped. She hung up the phone and disappeared into the bedroom.

“Mommy’s crying,” Allen said, looking at Sam.

“Come on, let’s go look through those toys we got.” Sam took Allen’s hand.

Chevalier stood outside the strange ranch house and looked around. The house was quiet, and there was a black Dodge pick-up outside by the garage. He heard hoof beats as someone rode toward him. He turned

and watched the boy on the horse. He was a teenager with black hair and green eyes.

"Who're you?" he asked, stopping his horse at Chevalier.

"Are you Allen?"

"Yeah." The boy looked at him curiously.

"I'm looking for your mother," he said, studying the teenage features of his son. It had been 12 years since he'd seen him. For twelve years he held his promise and stayed away from them.

"She's up in south pasture with Aaron."

"Who is Aaron?" Chevalier felt a pang of jealousy. He worried that she had found someone else and just hoped that he was good to her.

"My little brother," the boy said, looking over his shoulder. "Here comes Mom."

Chevalier looked at the horses coming closer and his heart pounded in his chest. Emily hadn't changed at all. Her red hair spilled out from the cowboy hat and she was smiling at the boy next to her on the painted stallion. He was talking to her and smiling. Black hair peeked out from under his Stetson.

Emily stopped her horse as soon as she saw Chevalier.

"Get inside," she told the boys.

Aaron and Allen both slipped off of their horses and tied them to a post, and then went inside, keeping a close eye on the strange man.

"What do you want?" she asked Chevalier, sliding off of her horse.

"Is Aaron mine?" he asked. Her piercing green eyes bored deep into his soul.

"Nothing on this ranch is yours," she said.

Both turned to the house as Allen came out with a shotgun. He handed it to Emily, and then stood by her with his arms crossed. Chevalier was amazed how much he looked like her, how he stood like her, and the way he held his jaw.

"It's nice to see you are taking care of your Mom," Chevalier said, smiling.

Allen's eyes narrowed, "Want me to call the Sheriff?"

"No, go back inside," she said, and cocked the shotgun when Allen obeyed.

"Are you going to shoot me?" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

“I don’t have to kill you. I just have to slow you down enough that I can get away,” she quoted something Kyle said to her long ago.

Chevalier nodded, “I just wanted to see that you’re ok.”

“We’re fine.”

She slipped off her leather gloves and laid them down on the horse’s saddle. Chevalier caught a glimpse of the essence ring as she pushed her hands into her pockets. He knew Aaron had to be his. She hadn’t found anyone else.

“Elder?” he heard someone calling him, and it broke him out of his trance. He frowned. He never slept or dreamed, but imagined that was what a dream would be like and wondered if the dream was Emily’s.

“Yes?” he asked Mark.

“The Encala Elder is requesting a conference with you.”

“Very well, I’ll go to his cell,” Chevalier said, standing up. The dream had shaken him. He couldn’t imagine going twelve years without seeing Emily or Allen. He pulled himself out of the thought and squared his shoulders toward the Encala Elder.

“You called for me?” he asked, leaning back against the wall.

“This is torture! I demand you destroy that interrogation chamber immediately,” the Elder scowled at him.

“No”

“The Encala won’t stand for this.”

“Emily keeps them at bay. They are afraid to come and get you,” he said, coldly.

“They know she’s gone, I told you that. They will come.”

“Tell me what I want and I’ll let you go.”

“They have an ancient,” Chevalier heard from beside him. He turned to the cell by the Elder.

“Shut up,” the Encala Elder hissed toward the cell.

“An ancient did this?” Chevalier asked, stepping toward the cell.

“Please, let me feed,” he begged.

“Open the door,” Chevalier told the guard.

“You are a traitor!” the Elder yelled to his now former faction member.

The guards opened the door and Chevalier wrapped his hand around the back of the Encala’s neck, leading him upstairs. They stepped into the

Council's conference room, and he sat down as Chevalier sat by Damon, the only other one there.

"He said the Encala have an ancient," Chevalier told Damon.

"A mind controlling ancient?" Damon asked.

"Please, let me feed," the Encala said.

"When we are done, you'll get your thirst quenched," Damon told him.

"Yes, the Ancient can control minds," the Encala said, licking his lips.

"How does he control us?" Chevalier asked.

"I don't think they've asked him."

"How do they know he's not controlling him then?"

"It takes a mortal. There are no mortals in the Encala palace," he said, proudly.

Chevalier frowned, "How does it take a mortal?"

"I don't know. I just know that it takes a mortal in the area before the Ancient can control a heku. So they sent Tim, knowing he'd be thrown in the palace prison," he explained. He seemed proud that he knew all of the information.

“Why not use Emily?”

“We knew she would leave, and we still needed control.”

“How is it you know all of this?” Chevalier asked him.

“I’m on the Council… or was… now I’m thinking I’m a free heku,” he said, frowning slightly.

Damon blurred to the Encala and tore his head off in one swift movement, “Do you think he was telling the truth?”

“One way to find out… we’ll ask for an exchange, their Elder for the Ancient,” Chevalier said, stepping over the mess on the floor.

Damon walked out with him, “That also means that it’s not safe for her to come back until we get that Ancient. They can use her to get to us.”

“I’m not sure she will come back,” Chevalier said, walking toward the foyer.

“We’ll find her, I’m sure of it. If you can just talk to her...” he suggested, and then fell silent.

“You go and check it out. I’m not sure I can leave the house yet,” Emily said, making lunch.

“I can’t leave you and Allen alone,” Sam said.

“I’m pretty sure that was an order. Make sure the house is nice and the stables are in good order. Also, check their farm logs and make sure they’ve been putting out good crops,” she said.

“I can’t believe he left us enough money for that large of a place.”

“I know,” she said, staring out the window.

“I’ll go in the morning then,” he told her, and disappeared.

“Where’s he going?” Allen asked, as Emily spooned him some stew.

“To Texas. He’s going to check on a new house for us.”

“With Daddy?”

“No, Baby, not with Daddy.” She sat down, but couldn’t eat. Her stomach was still turning circles, and her diet now consisted of 7up and crackers.

Emily curled up with Allen to sleep. She hated to sleep alone and Allen started sleeping with her. She watched as he slept and she felt her heart ache. She ran her fingers through his black hair and lightly kissed his forehead. Emily woke up a bit when Sam left the house for Texas, and

then fell right back asleep. This baby was making her more tired than Allen had.

Emily sat up quickly when she heard a truck approaching. She pulled the covers over Allen and ran to the front door. She stepped out, still wearing one of Kyle's old shirts, and waited for the truck to stop. The windows were tinted too darkly for her to see who it was. She gasped when Kyle stepped out. He stood by the truck and looked at her.

"Hello," he said, unsure of how she would react.

"I would tell you to go away, but it's your house," she said, crossing her arms. It was cold outside with just the thin shirt.

"I just want to talk to you," he said, stepping up toward her.

"Are you alone?"

"Yes"

"But I suppose they know where you are."

"No, they don't." He stopped a few yards away from her.

"You didn't tell them?"

"No," he said, watching her eyes. "I didn't want to scare you away. I've had a feeling for a few weeks that you were here."

“I’m not going back, and if you’ll let me stay here for another week, I’ll be out of your hair,” she told him.

“Please, let me talk to you.”

“Start talking.” She was afraid of letting him too close to her. She wasn’t sure how strong the pregnancy scent was yet.

“At least let’s go inside where it’s warmer.”

“I’m fine.”

Kyle sighed, “He’s miserable, Em. Actually, we all are. The three of us… myself, Maleth, and Chevalier are all devastated by what we did to you. It was a mind controlling ancient.”

“That doesn’t change anything.”

“It should, you’re safer with us.”

“Oh? You know… since I’ve been in this house, I’ve not been attacked or bitten. Seems to me like I’m safer here.”

“For now, but the Encala and the Valle are looking for you… and they will find you.” He took another step towards her.

“I can take care of them myself,” she said.

“Only small groups of them. They know that, and I’m sure they’ll send hundreds.” He took one step closer.

“Stay back,” she said, taking a step back.

“I hadn’t planned on going back without you,” he said.

“That’s fine, as I said, in a week you can have the place to yourself.”

“Just think about it. Let me spend that week with you,” he asked.

“No, stay back,” she said again, and started to panic when he advanced on her and wrapped his arms around her tightly.

“We’ve missed you,” he told her, and then his body froze and he pulled back from her, his eyes wide.

“Go away,” she said, and opened the door.

“Emily, does he know?”

She stopped and lowered her head, “No.”

“He needs to know. This changes everything,” Kyle said, putting a hand on her shoulder.

She pulled away from him, “No it doesn’t. It makes things worse if I go back. I can do this alone, and that’s what I plan to do.”

Kyle stepped into the house and winced slightly. He turned toward the door and smelled the fresh air. He hated the feeling her pregnant scent gave him, the primal urge to drink, “I’ll stay with you this week.”

“See, the heku have a hard time doing as I wish,” she said, shutting the door behind them.

“Give me one week. Just one week.”

“You’ll leave if I tell you to?”

“Yes, even though it’s my house.”

“Kyle!” Allen yelled, running for him. Kyle scooped Allen up in his arms and hugged him.

Emily fought it for as long as she could, but finally ran for the bathroom.

“Mommy’s sick,” Allen told Kyle.

“Yeah I see.” Kyle put Allen down and poured a glass of 7up. He went to the bathroom door and knocked.

“Go away,” she said to him.

“I have some 7up for you.”

She thought for a moment, “Ok.”

Kyle opened the door and handed the glass over to her. She was sitting on the floor, leaning up against the wall.

“Do you need anything else?”

She shut the door with her foot and heard a phone ring.

Kyle answered, “Yes?”

“I’m in Colorado.” Emily cringed and listened.

“No sign yet. I checked at your house up by Buford, but no one’s been there.”

“I guess maybe Nevada after I check out one more thing here.”

“Yes, I will, as soon as I find anything.” He hung up the phone.

“You lied to him,” Emily said from the doorway.

“Right now, my main concern is you,” he told her, sliding the phone back into his pocket.

“I’m ok, Kyle. I’ve made up my mind. Moving Allen and I back into the human world is what’s right for us,” she said, sitting down with a box of crackers.

“He’ll go into stasis, you know that.”

“I figured as much, but I have to look after Allen and… all of us,” she said, biting a cracker.

“What will you do if the Encala or Valle find you?”

“Fight back. I’ll do the best I can to take them out,” she said, starting to feel sick again.

“It’s not a matter of if. It’s a matter of when.”

“I know… but I have to take my chances.”

“Was it that bad?”

“Yes, being watched and babysat was humiliating, and I refuse to raise my son confined and trapped. Boys need to run, and play, and climb trees. They need to skin their knees and break bones,” she said to him.

“We know that, and we’ve discussed how things can be different if you’ll come back.”

“I can’t come back. I’ve been attacked more since I moved in with the heku than before,” she reminded him.

He nodded, “We realize that. We also realize that the more we pushed you under our protective thumb, the more you put yourself in harm’s way to get away.”

“I’m going to take a nap. Will you watch Allen?” she asked, standing up and wobbling slightly.

“Emily, you don’t look well,” he said, steadying her with his hand.

“I’m fine,” she told him, disappearing through the foyer and upstairs to the bedroom.

“She’s stubborn,” Kyle said, and smiled at Allen.

“Where’s Daddy?”

“He’s at the palace.”

“Call him!” Allen asked, handing Kyle Emily’s cell phone.

“Let’s not, he’s busy at work.”

Allen frowned and crawled down from the table to play with a toy fire truck. Kyle watched him and listened to Emily cry in her room. After twenty minutes, she finally fell asleep. Kyle put Allen down for a nap and then went into his office. He glanced a few times at his phone, and then let his mind fall into a trance. The sound of footsteps brought him out, but he hadn’t made any decisions yet.

He walked toward the living room and saw Emily lying on the couch. He sat down next to her and looked at her pale face.

“Emily, honestly, let’s take you to a doctor.”

“No, I can’t leave the house,” she said, watching the TV.

“You don’t look well.”

“Funny, I don’t feel all that hot either, but I’m not leaving.” She flipped through channels.

Kyle moved over and sat in his recliner and watched the TV as she flipped through the channels repeatedly. He looked over when Emily’s phone rang, then stood up and handed it to her.

“Thanks,” she said, and flipped it open. “What?”

“I’m so sorry I don’t sound well.” She rolled her eyes and Kyle smiled.

“No, actually I don’t.”

“No, I haven’t gone to a doctor, but wow, I’m hearing an echo in here.”

Kyle chuckled and turned back to the TV.

“Why did you call?”

“I’m perfectly aware that the Valle and Encala are looking for me.”

“Won’t matter, I’m moving soon,” she said, and hung up the phone.

“How’s Chevalier?” Kyle asked, smiling.

“Irritated, as usual,” she answered, and he saw her eyes fill up with tears, so he looked away.

They were both quiet for a few minutes while they watched the news.

“I’m going to take a nap,” she said, standing up slowly and grabbing her 7up.

“You just woke up 30 minutes ago.”

“Yeah and I’m still tired,” she snapped, and went back to bed.

Kyle watched Allen, then fed him dinner, and put him to bed in a spare room. He snuck into Emily’s room and watched her all night as she slept. He still didn’t like her color, or the way she slept without moving. He’d seen her sleep enough to know she was naturally a restless sleeper, usually plagued by nightmares.

He left her room when Allen woke up in the morning. He fed the toddler breakfast, and checked on Emily often. He grabbed her phone quickly when it rang, and looked at the ID. It was Sam.

“Sam?” Kyle asked.

The other end was quiet.

“She’s ok, I’m here with her.”

“Kyle, you better not lay a finger on her,” Sam said, angrily.

“I won’t. I’m worried about her, she’s sleeping a lot.”

Sam sighed, “Define a lot.”

“Napped twice, but the last one was all night, so right about 16 hours,” Kyle said, concerned.

“Did she sleep a lot when she was first pregnant with Allen?” Sam asked.

“No one knows, the Valle had her,” Kyle said, irritated.

“This deal fell through. I’ll be back tomorrow morning,” Sam said, and hung up the phone.

Kyle decided it was time to wake Emily. He sat down beside her and touched her arm. She opened her eyes slightly.

“What?” she mumbled.

“Em, how far along are you?”

“I don’t know,” she said, and fell back to sleep.

“Great,” Kyle whispered. He left a note for Emily, dressed Allen in a warm coat, and left the house, locking the door behind him.

When they got back to the house, Allen was enjoying an ice cream cone and Kyle carried a bag full of supplies. They visited the library, and he had a chance to research human pregnancy. He discovered that Emily was sleeping too much, and all he could come up with was low blood sugar.

Kyle dumped the groceries out on the counter and pulled a cookbook from his coat, “Ok Allen, let’s cook.”

Allen stood on a chair beside Kyle and watched as he began to cut up vegetables.

Emily peeked around the corner, “Are you cooking?”

“Yes, we are,” Kyle replied, stirring something in a skillet.

“Don’t hurt yourself,” she said, and refilled her glass of 7up.

Kyle sat a plate down by her, and she cringed away from it, “I’m not hungry.”

“You need to eat. I did some research, and I think your blood sugar is low,” he explained, sitting down by her.

“That’s what you think is it?” she asked, and picked up a fork, stabbing a piece of chicken.

“Yes”

“Hrm, this is good,” she said, taking another bite.

Kyle smiled and high-fived Allen, “We did it, Kiddo.”

“Yeah,” Allen said, and grinned.

“Oh, Sam called. He said he’ll be back in the morning… he said the deal fell through.”

Emily dropped her fork, “Great.”

“There will be other deals, just eat,” he told her, handing her back her fork.

“I liked that one.”

“You can stay here as long as you like. I could even give the house to you,” he suggested.

“I want a ranch, and I’m not going to take your house.”

“You just don’t want me knowing where you are,” he mumbled.

“You’re right,” she said, and smiled.

“We’ll be back in an hour or so,” Emily said, kissing Allen good-bye.

“We’ll be here,” Sam said.

Emily stepped out of the house for the first time in weeks, and hopped into the Humvee. Kyle crawled into the seat next to her and smiled. She looked out over the snow packed road and gripped the steering wheel with shaky hands.

“Do you want me to drive?” Kyle asked, taking one of her shaking hands in his.

“It’s not the drive… it’s not safe out here.” She watched the snow fall.

“No one but me knows where you are. You have to get out of that house,” he said, and reached over to start the engine.

Emily nodded and put the Humvee into drive, “You sure we shouldn’t take your truck?”

“The Hummer is better in this kind of snow, it’s ok,” he said, sitting back in the seat.

Emily moved slowly through the narrow snowy road and breathed easier when she saw black top. Her speed picked up as she hit I-70 for the road trip into Denver.

“See, this isn’t so bad,” Kyle said, smiling as her hands quit shaking.

“Not bad at all.” She grinned, but then her face fell when she heard the siren.

Kyle looked behind them, “Are you speeding?”

“No,” she said, and pulled off to the right hand side of the freeway.

“Just act casual,” he suggested, leaning back.

Emily rolled her window down and looked at the police officer. He was standing a ways back from her window with his hand on his gun.

“Is there a problem?” she asked.

“Step out of the car, Ma’am,” he said, as two more police cruisers pulled up.

Emily looked at Kyle and then opened the door and stepped out. She went from looking down on the officer to him looking down on her when she got out of the jacked up Humvee.

“You too, Sir, get out,” an officer said from Kyle’s side of the car.

Emily heard Kyle’s door open and he walked around to her side. When he appeared, both were shoved against the truck.

“Hey, watch it,” Kyle growled, as was Emily slammed into the truck.

“Shut up,” the officer said, putting handcuffs on Kyle. Emily watched Kyle allow the handcuffs as she felt hers being tightened.

“What’s going on?” she asked, wincing.

“This vehicle has been reported stolen,” the officer said, spinning her around to face him.

“It’s my husband’s car,” she said, frowning.

“Yeah, well, you can tell that to the judge,” he said, and ushered her into the back of his car. Kyle was put in a different patrol car and Emily frowned at him. She wondered why he didn’t break the cuffs and blur away.

Emily was so mad, she was shaking as they took her picture and fingerprinted her. She was furious when the deputy announced to the room, Kyle included, that she was five foot even. She blushed and saw Kyle turn away from her and laugh.

Emily was separated from Kyle and given an ugly orange jumpsuit. She put it on and was taken to a cell. The loud bang of the door slamming made her skin crawl. She looked around at the empty cells and sat down on the hard bed.

Kyle arrived at the cell next to her almost an hour later. Once his door was shut and the deputy left, he came to the bars that separated them.

“You ok?” he asked.

“No, I’m not ok. My husband just put me in jail,” she said, angrily.

“I called Sam. He wasn’t there, but I left a message for him to come and bail us out,” he said, amused.

“This is not funny.” She glared at him.

“Oh come on, it is a little.”

“Why are you even here? Why didn’t you break the handcuffs and blur away?”

“Because then, you would have to explain what happened, don’t you think?”

“Yeah I guess.”

Kyle smiled, “That was pretty smart of him.”

She looked at him shocked, “Are you kidding me?”

“Come on, it worked, he found you,” Kyle said, still laughing.

“Yeah well he found you too… how well do you think that’s going to go over?”

“Oh, hadn’t thought of that,” Kyle said, sitting down on the bed in his cell.

Emily curled up on the hard bed and stared at the wall. She became more and more angry, both at Chevalier and at Sam as the night came and they were still in jail. It wasn’t until 3am when a deputy appeared and opened their cells.

“You’ve been bailed out,” he said, tossing their clothes at them.

Emily stormed out of the cell and changed quickly in the bathroom. Kyle was waiting for her in the lobby when she got out.

“They said he’s waiting for us outside,” Kyle said, obviously having fun. He opened the door for her and she stepped out into the cold air. When they left the house it was still warm enough she hadn’t needed a jacket.

“I’m so glad you find this funny,” she said, walking down the ice covered sidewalk.

Kyle laughed and then stopped and put an arm out to stop Emily. She looked up and glared.

“I was surprised when I found that I needed to bail out two of you,” Chevalier said, and leaned up against the Humvee.

“You put me in jail,” she snapped at him.

“Yes, I did. Now get in the Humvee where it’s warmer,” he said, opening the door.

“That’s alright,” she said, and made sure to give him a wide berth as she walked out into the street and hailed a cab.

“Emily, get in the Humvee,” Kyle said, frustrated.

Emily got into the cab and shut the door.

“Where to, Ma’am?”

Emily gave him Kyle’s address, and then said, “Tell you what. There’s an extra $200 cash if you can lose the Humvee.”

The cab driver grinned and gunned it, spinning out and taking off into the empty streets.

Chevalier growled and jumped into the Humvee, followed by Kyle. He put it in gear and followed the cab.

“I can explain,” Kyle said, holding on as Chevalier fought to keep up with the cab.

“I hope so,” he said, seething.

Kyle inconspicuously smelled around the Humvee, and picked up no trace of Emily’s scent. He remembered that they left the doors open when they were arrested. The officers must have left it open for a while.

“Damnit,” Chevalier hissed, and hit the steering wheel. The cab pulled around a railroad bar and had gotten across just as the train passed.

“Thank you,” Emily said, looking behind at the train. The train was too short though, and she could still see clearly when the Humvee took off again.

“He’s back... hurry,” she said, watching behind her.

Emily gripped the front seat as the cab began to lose traction and spin. The driver overcorrected and flipped the yellow car. Emily braced herself when she felt the car rolling over and over as it went down a small embankment. It finally came to rest on its top. The windows were smashed in, and the driver wasn’t moving.

“Trust me, stay here,” Kyle said, jumping out of the Humvee, but he turned when he heard Chevalier behind him.

“No kidding… trust me on this. You don’t need to smell her blood right now,” he said sternly. Chevalier froze, and then nodded.

Kyle ran down the embankment and knelt by the car, “Emily?”

“Get me out of here,” she said, reaching a bloody hand toward him.

He tried to open the door, but it was jammed. He braced his feet against the snowy hillside and pulled hard, easily breaking the door free. Kyle got back to his knees and crawled into the car, “Where are you hurt?”

“Get the driver,” she said, pointing to him. He still wasn’t moving.

Kyle reached up and felt the driver’s neck, “He’s gone.”

“He’s not dead!” she yelled at him.

Kyle reached over and yanked her seatbelt off of her, and she fell to the glass covered hood. He took her under her arms and pulled her out of the car.

Chevalier watched anxiously as Kyle pulled Emily out of the taxi. He saw Emily stumble to her feet, and then collapse in Kyle’s arms. Kyle picked her up and cradled her in his arms. He looked from Chevalier to his house, which was less than a quarter of a mile away.

“Meet us at the house,” he said.

“Get her in here,” Chevalier said, angrily.

Kyle blurred toward the house and heard the Humvee pull back out onto the road. Kyle was just laying Emily on the couch when he heard the door slam to the Humvee. He blurred outside.

“She doesn’t want you in here,” he said, closing the door to the house.

“I don’t really care what she wants,” Chevalier said, approaching the steps.

“Breaking her wishes isn’t going to help her trust you,” Kyle said. He was afraid that one smell of Emily, and the Elder would lose control. He knew the Elder hadn’t fed since she left. He spent all of his time searching for her.

“Why are you even here?” Chevalier asked Kyle.

“I’ll explain that later… just wait in the Humvee for me, ok?” he asked, and disappeared back into the house. Chevalier growled and went back to the car.

Kyle returned to Emily, “Where do you hurt?”

“Is he coming in?” she asked, trying to sit up.

“Not right now,” he said, pulling her hair back off of her forehead, “You hit your head, anything else?”

“No. He can’t come in here, he’ll know,” she said, watching Kyle closely.

“I’m not sure I can stop him.”

“It’s your house.”

“Yeah well, he’s my Elder.” Kyle disappeared into the kitchen and came back out with a wet dishtowel. He started cleaning the blood off of Emily’s face and arms. Other than small cuts from the glass, and a cut on her forehead, she didn’t seem injured.

“I’ll go talk to him,” she said, sitting up.

“I’ll go with you.”

“No, let me talk to him alone… outside.” She got to her feet and steadied herself, then headed for the door.

“If you pass out, he’s going to catch you,” Kyle said, watching her.

“Fine… come with,” she said, and opened the front door. Chevalier looked over from inside the Humvee and opened the door, then stepped out.

“Stay back by the car,” Emily told him, and he leaned back against the black Humvee.

“Are you ok?” he asked, looking her over.

“Yes, why did you have me arrested?”

“I needed to know where you were.”

“Why? You promised me that the next time I left you would let me go,” she reminded him.

“I know I did, but I never thought you would do it.”

“You know now, so you can go, and take Kyle with you,” she said to him.

“Wait a minute,” Kyle said, but she held a hand up to stop him.

“I can’t start a new life if I’m still surrounded by heku,” she told him.

“If I leave tonight… I’ll tell him,” Kyle said, narrowing his eyes.

“You wouldn’t!”

“I would and I will.”

“Tell me what?” Chevalier asked, taking a step toward them.

“Get back to the truck,” Emily hissed at him, and he shrugged and went back to the Humvee.

“Why are you doing this?” Emily whispered to Kyle.

“You need someone with you,” he whispered back, knowing full well that Chevalier could hear them.

“I have Sam and Allen. We can handle a ranch on our own.”

“I stay or I tell, period,” he smiled as she fidgeted.

“Fine… then just you go,” she said to Chevalier.

“I’m not leaving until I find out a few things,” he said, looking at Kyle.

“What was I supposed to do? Tell you where she is and then have her disappear alone… or stay here with her and at least she would have my protection?” he explained.

“You still disobeyed a direct order.”

“Yes I did, and I would do it again. When I get back you can punish me then,” he said, matter-of-factly.

“Oh I plan on it.”

“Will you two just stop!” Emily cried from behind them. “Don’t you see how this can be irritating? I can’t deal with it anymore.”

“We can stop,” Kyle said to her.

“No you can’t… he gives orders, and they are obeyed, it’s sickening.”

“It’s my job,” Chevalier said, watching her.

“Exactly… and it’s not going to stop, but I want no part of it. Or are my fragile human emotions making me stupid again?” she asked, angrily.

“No one’s ever called you stupid, Em,” Chevalier said, sighing.

“You did,” she snapped.

“We told you… that wasn’t us,” Kyle said to her.

“Yeah, that’s what you say… well hell,” Emily said, and disappeared back inside.

Sam stepped out onto the porch with Allen in his arms. Chevalier smiled, and when Sam put Allen down, he ran into his Dad’s arms.

Chevalier hugged Allen tight.

“Mommy’s sick,” Allen told him.

“She is?” Chevalier looked at Sam.

“She’s had the flu,” he said, coldly.

Allen asked to be let down, and then took Chevalier’s hand, “Come inside.”

“I don’t think I’m welcome,” he said to the toddler.

“You think right,” Sam said. “Come on Allen, let’s get back inside.”

Allen pulled closer to Chevalier, “Daddy’s here.”

Chevalier picked Allen up again, “What do you say I take him back with me?”

“I think Emily would have something to say about that.” Sam glared.

“Then bring her out and let me ask her.”

“She’s busy,” Sam said, crossing his arms.

“Doing what? She was just here,” Chevalier asked, and frowned.

“Mommy’s sick,” Allen said, pointing inside.

“She has the flu right now?” Chevalier asked Kyle.

“Yeah she does, and you had her locked up,” he told the Elder.

“I should go tell her I’m sorry,” he said, walking a few steps forward.

“No, we’ll tell her for you,” Sam said, stepping in front of the door.

“What’s in that house that you two are trying to keep from me?” he growled, setting Allen down.

“Don’t do it,” Kyle said, crouching near the door.

“Are you going to stop me?” Chevalier asked, crouching low and hissing.

“Yes, I am,” Kyle replied.

“So am I,” Sam said, though he knew he couldn’t fight a heku.

Sam watched as Chevalier blurred into Kyle, knocking him into the house. Kyle pushed off of the brick wall and landed against Chevalier, sending him back into the snow. The rest was too fast for Sam’s eyes to see, but he put his body in front of the door. When Chevalier stood up, Kyle was in a bloody mess at his feet.

“You can’t stop me,” Chevalier said, walking toward the old man.

“She’ll never trust you if you do this,” his only defense was words.

“She’ll get over it.” Chevalier blurred past Sam and into the house. He was moving so fast he didn’t have time to breathe until he was in the main living room. He stopped and looked around, and then frowned. His body tensed as he inhaled deeply.

Kyle appeared ahead of him, crouched, “Don’t do it.”

Chevalier’s instincts were overwhelming. The scent of his prey was all he had on his mind. The need to quench his thirst was so strong it killed any rational thought. He ran his tongue across his sharp canines and

scanned the room. One thing was standing in his way, another heku, about to take his kill.

Chevalier crouched low and hissed as his hands curled into claws.

“Chevalier, stop it,” Kyle said, watching him closely.

Emily stepped out of the bathroom and gasped when she saw Chevalier. He looked at her with primal eyes and grinned. Kyle hit Chevalier full force from the side and sent him through the large plate glass window. The two wrestled in the snow and their movements were too fast for Emily to see. She grabbed Allen and ran up to the bedroom, locking the door, and then into the bathroom. She crawled into the empty tub and held Allen close to her.

Outside, the fight stopped as Kyle pinned Chevalier to the ground. Chevalier was panting and looking around, frustrated.

“Do I need to kill you?” Kyle hissed.

Chevalier looked up at him, “You should have told me.”

“Are you in control?”

“Yes,” Chevalier said, and got up when Kyle jumped off of him. He looked into the house. It had been too long since he fed. He knew he couldn’t go back in there.

Kyle watched him, still crouching defensively.

“You should have told me,” he said again in a whisper.

“I promised her I wouldn’t,” Kyle explained, standing again when he saw the anguish in Chevalier’s face.

“I could have killed her.”

“I wouldn’t have let you.”

“Is that why she left?” he asked, looking at Sam.

Sam shook his head, “She didn’t know until we’d been here for a while.”

“Whose place is this?” Chevalier asked, looking up at the long row of windows in the mansion.

“It’s mine,” Kyle said.

“This whole time you knew then?” Chevalier growled.

“No, I didn’t. I gave her this information a long time ago, in case of an emergency. I’d forgotten about it until I was here in Colorado checking out your place. I figured while I was so near, I might as well check here. That’s when I found her,” he spoke quickly, justifying his actions.

“I’m going to go feed… and I will be back. If she’s gone when I get here, I’ll find all of you, and I’m not promising any of you will survive,” he growled, and crawled into the Humvee, spinning out onto the street.

Kyle clapped Sam on the shoulder and walked back inside. They found Emily still huddled in the bathtub with Allen. She gasped when they appeared, and Sam jumped in front of Kyle, trying to block him from her abilities.

“It’s us,” he said, quickly.

“Where is he?” Emily asked, holding Allen tightly.

“He went to feed, but he’ll be back,” Kyle said, and put a hand out for her.

She stood up and handed Allen to Sam, “We won’t be here when he comes back.”

“He’s pretty mad. He told us we better be here when he gets back, and I don’t think we should mess with him on that,” Sam said, still shaken from how close the attack had come.

“I’m not afraid of him. I’m not one of his minions.”

“Doesn’t matter, he knows now… at least talk to him, please,” Kyle asked.

“Oh right, let him kill me when he gets back? No thank you,” she said, walking into the bedroom.

“You know as well as I do that if he had known about the baby, none of that would have happened,” Kyle said in his defense.

“That’s it though, isn’t it? I’m always going to be someone’s snack.”

“Talk to him,” Sam suggested. “At least long enough that he won’t hunt us down.”

“You both think I should?” She frowned.

Sam and Kyle nodded.

“Fine… but Sam, you take Allen away,” Emily said, running her hands along the back of her neck.

“Em?” Kyle said, moving to her.

“I’m just… a little…” she said, and then sat on the bed, “just a little dizzy.”

“You should go to the hospital,” Sam said, getting her a glass of 7up.

“No, no hospitals.”

“What hurts?” Kyle asked, kneeling by her on the bed.

“My neck and my head.” She pressed her palms against her eyes.

Kyle ran his fingers along her neck. She winced when he touched the muscles by her spine.

“Stop it,” she said, pulling away from him.

“Lay down, I’m going to rub that,” he said.

“What? No. I’m fine.” She started to stand up, but Kyle quickly flipped her onto her stomach on the bed and straddled her, sitting on her thighs.

“Hey,” she said, trying to get up, but couldn’t.

“Let him help,” Sam told her, and took Allen out of the room.

“See, no one cares what I say,” she mumbled.

Kyle grinned, “Only when you’re being obstinate.”

“I’m not obstinate,” she said, lying back against the bed.

In one fluid movement, Kyle pulled her shirt up and over her head.

“Wait!” she said, grabbing it.

“Calm down, I can’t see anything,” he said, and undid her bra.

“Seriously, you’re pushing it,” she hissed.

He laughed and began massaging her back.

“I should ash you,” she told him, but began to relax under his touch.

“Yeah, you should,” he said, as he felt the knots in her back loosening. He grinned when he heard her breathing settle down and become rhythmic. She had fallen asleep.

He ran his fingers through her hair and massaged her scalp for a bit, then moved back down to her neck. He’d heard of whiplash before, and it sounded to him like something she probably had. He knew she would be sore in the morning from the car wreck. He just hoped she hadn’t left enough trace in the cab for the police to come to the house asking questions.

Kyle lost track of time, but turned suddenly when he saw someone at the doorway.

“You’re really pushing it, Kyle,” Chevalier hissed.

“Yeah, that’s what she told me,” Kyle said, grinning.

“Then get your hands off of my wife.”

“Not yet, I’ve almost gotten the knots out of her back. You can kill me later,” he said, and found a new knot to work with.

Chevalier walked in and shut his eyes, “That scent.”

Kyle nodded, “I know.”

“How far along is she?” Chevalier asked as he sat down on the bed beside her.

“She doesn’t know.”

“What does the doctor say?”

“She won’t go.” Kyle crawled off of her and covered her with a blanket.

“Why not?” Chevalier frowned.

“Because she was afraid of leaving the house… and go figure… it took me three days to talk her into leaving, and she gets arrested,” Kyle said, accusingly.

“Let’s take this up out of the room,” Chevalier whispered.

Kyle nodded and left the room. He glanced at the remnants of the plate glass window, “You broke my house.”

“I’ll pay for it,” Chevalier said, not finding humor in the situation.

“You can’t still be mad at me. You know why I had to stay… better me than no one,” Kyle said, sitting down on the couch. The cold wind coming in through the broken window didn’t bother the heku.

“Yes, I can still be mad. You had no right to keep her from me.” He continued to stand.

“So you’d rather I have told you and had her disappear.”

“No, I would rather you have told me, and then kept her here until I arrived.”

“Oh that’s right. I should have asked nicely,” Kyle said, sarcastically.

“Have you forgotten who I am?” Chevalier growled.

“No, I have not, but I’m already going to be in the interrogation chamber for what I did,” he said, looking out the window.

Chevalier ignored that remark, “Talk to her. She listens to you.”

“She doesn’t listen to me,” Kyle told him.

“More than she does me,” Chevalier said, sitting down on the couch.

“She loves you, you know that, right?”

“I’m not so sure of that anymore, too much has happened.”

“She does,” Kyle said toward the Elder.

“I just want to get her back to the palace where it’s safe, and then we can find out.”

Kyle just nodded. He wasn't sure she was going to go.

Sam came in a short time later carrying Allen, asleep in his arms. He quietly went upstairs and laid him down on a bed and then came back down stairs.

"There are cops around the cab," Sam said, sitting down.

"If they come to the house, we'll just tell them we called for a cab, but he never showed up," Kyle said, smoothly.

"I won't let you take her without her permission," Sam said, watching the two heku.

Chevalier nodded, "It's ok, Sam. I'm not going to force her to come back with me."

"You will eventually."

"I won't, all I want is for her to be happy."

"Then both of you should go now, before she wakes up," Sam suggested.

"She said I could stay," Kyle argued.

"It's painful for her to see a heku. You are just a reminder..." Sam stopped and watched his hands.

"Of what? Being bitten? Abused? Being confined?" Kyle asked.

“No… of him,” Sam said, nodding toward Chevalier.

Chevalier nodded, “She hates me that bad then.” It wasn’t a question.

“Quite the opposite. She loves you, and it’s hard for her to break away, especially when she’s reminded of you all the time,” Sam explained.

“Then why leave? If she loves me so much, why is she going away?”

“That’s not for me to say. I just see her, the way she watches Allen, she sees so much of you in him,” Sam looked toward the door.

“Then how can she just leave?” Chevalier asked again. “How can it be so easy for her to run away?”

“Easy? It’s harder on her than you could ever imagine.”

“How do you f…” Chevalier froze when he heard the soft voice from the bedroom call his name. Without another word, he blurred to Emily’s side as she knelt by the window.

“Em?” he said, sitting down.

“It hurts,” she moaned.

“Where does it hurt?” he asked, touching her shoulder.

“Please make them stop, Chev,” she begged, her eyes fixed on the snow outside.

“Emily…” Chevalier said, beginning to panic, “What hurts?”

“Get me off the island,” she groaned, and fell against the floor. Her back arched as a trickle of blood fell from her nose.

Chevalier frowned, “Kyle.”

“What happened?” Kyle asked, kneeling beside her.

“Look”

Kyle looked at the stream of blood, then stood and looked around the room, “There are no ashes.”

“Check outside,” he hissed, as Emily fell unconscious.

Kyle blurred out the door and returned a few seconds later, “All over, Chevalier. There are piles of ash all over out there.”

“What?” he asked, turning to Kyle.

“I’m not kidding. There are a lot of ashes out there,” Kyle said, confused.

“Who was it?” Chevalier asked, as he grabbed a tissue and wiped the blood from her face.

“Looks Encala. I think we may have been under attack,” Kyle turned and looked at Sam, who just walked in.

“Sam?” Chevalier asked him.

“The Winchesters have to stare down the ones they kill,” Sam explained.

“But… she doesn’t,” Chevalier said. “When she demonstrated her abilities to the Council, she was facing away from him.”

“That’s impossible, it takes eye contact,” Sam frowned.

Chevalier shook his head and looked back at Emily, “She doesn’t.”

Emily inhaled slowly and opened her eyes, then exhaled as her body tensed and her hands tightened into fists.

“Emily?” Chevalier asked her, taking her fists in his hands.

“I hear someone out there,” Kyle said, blurring from the room.

Sam followed him, and Chevalier moved to look out the window. He could see dark figures below, crouched low and approaching the house slowly. He turned when Emily screamed.

“Em,” he said, holding her down. Her back was arched and her eyes were rolled back in her head.

She collapsed onto the floor again, breathing deeply. A stream of blood began to trickle from her ears.

“Emily?” Chevalier shook her lightly.

Kyle blurred back into the bedroom, “It is the Encala, dozens of them. They are falling to ash, but they are still coming. We need to get out of here.”

“Sam!” Chevalier yelled.

Sam walked in slowly, “I’ve never seen a Winchester do this.”

“I don’t care what she’s doing. She can’t keep it up. We need to take her back to the palace,” he said.

“No,” Sam said. “She made it clear she wasn’t going back.”

“She can’t keep this up, and Kyle and I can’t fight off the entire Encala faction.”

Sam shook his head, “I won’t say yes.”

“Damnit, Sam, go get Allen… Kyle, get the Humvee,” Chevalier said, picking Emily up and wrapping a blanket over her. He blurred to the Humvee and crawled into the backseat as Kyle turned the heater up and looked around nervously. Sam finally came out carrying Allen. He buckled Allen into the car seat, still asleep, and then crawled into the front seat by Kyle. Kyle spun out and pulled away from the house.

“How many Encala were there?” Chevalier asked, looking behind them.

“A few dozen,” Kyle said, checking his rear-view mirror.

“Someone else was out there. The Winchesters have to see the eyes of the one they turn to ash, and only… maybe… ten or so,” Sam said, looking out the window.

“They were all turning to ash in front of my eyes, Sam. No one but Emily can do that… then there’s the blood,” Kyle said, watching the road closely. “I saw her kill 83 in one night, and thirteen in quick succession.”

“Go to the palace,” Sam whispered.

Kyle glanced at him, “You’ll take the heat from Emily?”

Sam nodded.

“What changed your mind?” Chevalier asked him, suspiciously.

“Elizabeth,” he whispered, watching out the window, deep in thought.

“Emily’s mother?”

“No, the eldest daughter of the first Elizabeth and Ulrich.” Sam looked back at Chevalier. Emily was still cradled in his arms, the blanket covering her face.

“What about her?”

“There was an attack on the city.” Sam was deep in thought watching Emily breathe, “The night she died.”

“How did she die?” Chevalier was suddenly intensely interested.

“I didn’t lie,” Sam said, looking at Chevalier. “The Winchesters have to see the heku eye-to-eye to ash them… all except for Elizabeth.”

“How… did… she die?”

“The night of the attack… the Equites started to fall quickly, turning to ash as we fought them.” Sam wiped a tear away with the back of his ancient hand, “When we won, the Valle were dancing in the streets. Then Lord Ulrich found her.”

Chevalier pulled Emily tighter against his chest.

“How many?” Kyle asked, respectfully.

“Lord Ulrich was never sure what happened. As far as he knew, Elizabeth didn’t even know that the Equites had attacked... but she knew… she was killing them by the dozens.”

“She died from it?” Kyle asked, frowning.

Sam nodded.

“The Winchesters have a limit, at least Elizabeth did.” He nodded at Emily, “That child is the only other direct descendant of a heku though. She’s stronger than Elizabeth even.”

“Could Elizabeth control it?” Kyle asked after a few minutes of silence.

“No, she saw those Equites and got scared. Emily is the first I’ve known that has any control.” His voice dropped to a whisper, “She saw the Encala coming and tried to protect us.”

Chevalier growled, “It’s not her job to protect the heku.”

“If we drive all night, we can be back in Council City by morning,” Kyle said, adjusting the rear-view mirror. He was keeping an extra eye out on the cars around them.

“Daddy?” Allen asked, yawning.

Chevalier mussed his black hair, “Good morning, Allen.”

“I’m hungry,” he said, and pulled the blanket up off of Emily, “Shhhhh.”

“Yes, shhhh,” Chevalier said, whispering.

Kyle pulled over at the first fast food restaurant he saw and ordered some pancakes and milk for Allen. He was eating happily by the time the Humvee pulled back onto the Interstate.

“Oops,” Allen said, as his milk spilled all over him.

“Gah, Allen,” Chevalier yelled, trying to clean him up and hold onto Emily at the same time.

“I got it,” Sam said, unbuckling and leaning back. “You do realize Allen’s not going to like traveling all day and all night.”

“What do you mean?” Kyle asked.

“He’s two, he can’t be in a car seat for that long. We’re going to have to get a hotel tonight.”

“We need to get back to Council City,” Chevalier hissed.

“We aren’t going to get attacked by the Encala after one night. Emily may need a break from the car too,” Sam told them.

They drove quickly toward Council City in silence. Each alone with their own thoughts, and each worried about Emily. Sam was right, and by nightfall, Allen was screaming and pulling at his car seat. Chevalier tried at first to block Emily’s ears, but soon found that even Allen’s wail wasn’t waking her up.

“Damnit, find a hotel,” Chevalier finally said.

Kyle pulled off at an exit and tried to find a nice hotel.

“I say we get one room tonight. We’ll watch while they sleep,” Kyle suggested. Sam and Chevalier both nodded.

Kyle slid out of the Humvee and ran into the hotel, a luxurious inn with water fountains and tall columns.

He returned a short time later, “I was able to get us the penthouse, top floor. I’ll be up as soon as I park the Humvee. I don’t want the valet in case we need to leave quickly.”

Chevalier took the key and slid out of the Humvee with Emily. He watched Sam unbuckle Allen, who finally stopped crying and they headed into the lobby. The mortals watched them oddly as Chevalier carried the limp body to the elevators.

“Floor please,” the elevator operator said, bored.

“Penthouse,” Chevalier told him, and watched as the numbers slowly crawled up.

When the doors opened, they stepped out into a large suite with plate glass windows on all sides. From that one suite, they could see all around the hotel grounds. Chevalier laid Emily down on one of the lush beds and covered her with a blanket. He watched her for a moment, but she didn’t stir.

Walking back out into the living room, he saw Kyle arriving, “Did you see there’s a pool? Should I take Allen swimming? I bet I can wear him out.”

“No, I’ll take him.” Sam said, taking Allen’s hand and heading back into the elevator.

“Have you considered how the palace heku are going to handle her scent?” Kyle asked.

“I hadn’t thought of that. I’ll alert the other Elders.” Chevalier pulled out his phone.

“Telling them isn’t going to help.”

“What do you suggest then?”

“What was it the Valle did? Menthol and hospital masks?” Kyle asked, and shrugged.

“Maybe we should, at least until they get used to her,” Chevalier said, then disappeared into the spare room to talk to the Elders in private.

Kyle stepped into Emily’s doorway and watched her sleep. He picked up a menu from the table and called room service, ordering one of everything from the menu.

Chevalier stepped out of the spare room, “Backup is coming, just in case.”

Kyle nodded and turned away from Emily, “Should she still be asleep?”

“I don’t know,” Chevalier sighed.

“I ordered some food. I thought maybe we could wake her up long enough to eat.”

“Good idea.”

The heku sat in silence and watched Emily sleep until they heard the bell, alerting them someone was waiting in the elevator for them. Chevalier stood in front of Emily’s door while Kyle opened the elevator and stepped aside. Four trolley’s full of domed trays were wheeled in, and Chevalier chuckled as Kyle tipped the delivery boys exceptionally well.

“What did you order?” Chevalier asked, grinning.

“All of it… I have no idea what she wants,” he said, and walked into Emily’s room. He sat on the edge of her bed and touched her shoulder, “Em?”

“Emily,” he said a little louder, and touched her face. When she didn’t respond, he looked at Chevalier.

Chevalier frowned and sat down by her other side, “Emily.”

He reached an arm under her and pulled her up to sitting. Her head rolled back against his arm, so he laid her back down gently, “That didn’t work.”

“She has to eat,” Kyle said, worried.

“Well, we can’t force it down her.”

The room phone rang and Kyle answered it, “Yes?”

“Yes they are with us. They may land,” he said, and hung up.

Chevalier looked at him.

Kyle moved to look out the window, “A helicopter was asking to land… it’s our backup.”

Chevalier nodded and tried again, in vain, to wake Emily up.

“Go meet them. They can’t just walk in here while she’s sleeping… it’s stronger when she’s asleep,” Chevalier said to Kyle, and he bowed and blurred out.

Chevalier shut the bedroom door and sat down beside Emily. He curled up next to her and pulled her against him, “Emily, I love you,” he whispered, and kissed her forehead.

He heard Kyle come in with the heku and he walked out of the room to greet them. He froze and looked around at them, his eyes narrowed. Maleth had come and was at an open window. Mark was bent over with his hands against his knees. Four other cavalry members were scattered around the room in various positions trying to smell anything but the scent in the room.

"I know it's hard," Chevalier said to them.

Mark nodded and breathed shallowly, "It's… my God."

Chevalier clapped him on the back, "It gets easier."

"I had forgotten…" Maleth said softly from the window, "How compelling she is."

"It's stronger when she's asleep, and Chevalier is right, it gets easier," Kyle said, checking on Emily.

"Why don't we take Emily back now and they can follow us in the Humvee?" Chevalier suggested.

"It's going to take tonight to get the palace ready for… for her," Maleth said, turning finally, though his voice was strained.

"Masks and menthol as we discussed?"

“Yes, it sounded like as good a plan as any.”

“And the Ancient?” Chevalier asked, and turned to watch Maleth.

“No answer yet on the exchange.”

“We can’t take her back to the palace then,” Kyle said, frowning.

“We have nowhere else to go,” Maleth told him.

“What if we attack her?” Chevalier asked.

“From what we can tell, only one of us at a time can… well… be controlled. We’ll just never be alone with her,” Maleth explained.

Chevalier nodded, “She’s going to make some changes though… she doesn’t know she’s going back to the palace.”

Mark frowned, “Where does she think she’s going?”

When Chevalier disappeared into Emily’s room, Kyle answered, “She hasn’t been awake since the Encala attack.”

“Is that normal?” Maleth asked, concerned.

“We don’t know,” Kyle glanced toward the door. “She killed dozens of them in a matter of minutes.”

“Kralen!” Allen yelled, before running from the elevator. He was scooped up by the heku. Allen wrapped his arms around his former guard.

“I can’t wake her up,” Chevalier said, leaning against the door jam.

Kyle sighed, “Maybe it’s time we take her to the hospital.”

“What do we tell them? She killed vampires with her mind and now she’s unconscious?” Sam asked.

Maleth walked past Chevalier into Emily’s room, and watched her for a moment before sitting down beside her, “Child?”

He touched her forehead lightly and ran his hand along the side of her face, “Emily?”

“Mommy!” Allen said, climbing up on the bed. “Mommy wake up,” he said, and landed right on her stomach.

Maleth pulled him off gently, “No, Baby.”

It didn’t pass his notice that even Allen hadn’t made her stir.

Kralen took Allen’s hand and led him out of the bedroom. Maleth joined them in the living area and sighed, “I don’t know what we can do, other than get her back to the palace and have the doctor look at her there.”

Chevalier nodded, “First thing in the morning, we’ll take the helicopter back.”

The night was long. Emily continued to sleep and Allen took a long time to go to sleep. The heku patrolled the windows, watching everything that was happening down on the ground around the hotel. No one spoke as they used all senses to keep an eye out for attacks.

Just as the sun was rising, Chevalier carried Emily to the helicopter on the roof of the hotel. Kyle, Maleth, Sam, Mark, and Allen went with them, while the other guards drove the Humvee.

“Why can’t I read her anymore?” Chevalier asked Sam finally.

“I’ve been thinking about that. I think… you broke part of the bond,” Sam said, hoping not to infuriate the Elder.

“Explain that,” Chevalier hissed.

“The three methods of breaking a marriage bond… infidelity, betrayal, and death.”

“Yes, so?”

“Don’t you see how beating her was a betrayal?” Sam asked.

Chevalier growled, “That wasn’t me.”

“Yes, well, she doesn’t fully believe that, does she?”

“She still thinks I hit her?” Maleth asked, horrified.

Sam nodded, not looking over at him.

Mark’s face was expressionless as he watched out the window. He couldn’t get the images out of his mind. Images of Chevalier slamming her repeatedly into the bedroom wall, and then Maleth backhanding her across the room. He exhaled slowly.

“We didn’t do it,” Maleth said to him, angrily.

Mark turned to them, “I stood there and let it happen.”

Chevalier looked at him, “You had to. We are your superiors.”

“Yes, but she was my charge,” Mark said, looking back out the window. His self-loathing was strong.

“We all just need to get over what happened,” Maleth said, softly.

“I can’t get it out of my head. It constantly replays in slow motion,” Mark whispered. “I kept waiting for her to turn you to ash, but she didn’t. She was in much pain, and was so afraid. Her screams echo through my head.”

“Coming up on Council City,” the pilot said, pulling the helicopter around the palace and landing gently on the helipad. Guards ran out from the doors and made a path into the palace for them.

Mark and Maleth were out of the helicopter first, and checked to make sure the guards had masks. When each was checked, Chevalier brought Emily out and carried her close to him. Mark walked closely in front of them, and listened for even the slightest hint of danger. Sam and Allen brought up the rear, and Allen was pointing excitedly at the familiar surroundings.

“The doctor is waiting in their bedroom,” a guard said, and handed a clipboard to Kyle, who signed something and handed it back to him.

Chevalier carried Emily into their room and laid her down on the bed. The doctor was there wearing the required mask and menthol.

“What’s the problem?” he asked, pulling a stethoscope from his bag.

“She killed a few dozen Encala and hasn’t woken up since,” Chevalier whispered.

“How long ago was that?”

Chevalier looked at Kyle, “About 32 hours.”

The doctor frowned and listened to her heart, and then looked up, “I’m sorry, Elder Chevalier, Elder Maleth, and Kyle, you will need to leave.”

Chevalier growled, “Why?”

“Does she fully trust you three now?” the doctor asked.

Kyle sighed and followed Mark, Maleth, and Chevalier out of the room. Four of the Cavalry moved into the room, as she was no longer to be alone with a heku.

The Cavalry members watched the doctor suspiciously as he listened to Emily’s heart and lungs, then shined a bright light into her eyes and ears. He pulled out an I.V. bag and swiftly put in the needle.

“Why are you doing that?” one of them asked, angrily.

“She needs fluid, she’s dehydrated,” the doctor said, adjusting the rate of fluid.

He turned to look at Emily when she mumbled something.

“Emily?” he asked, leaning over her. The menthol masked her smell nicely, and he was comfortable being closer to her.

Emily’s eyes flew open and she sat up quickly, looking at the masked figures. She screamed and quickly turned the five heku in the room to

ash. Before she could swing her legs out of bed, Chevalier, Kyle, Mark, and Maleth appeared in her room, ready to fight. She turned on them and stopped when she saw who it was.

“Emily,” Chevalier said, standing up out of a crouch and moving to her, “It’s us.”

She pointed at the ash piles on the floor, “The Valle.”

Chevalier looked at them and cringed, “Well… no… damnit. We should have thought of that.”

Kyle shrugged, “I didn’t think of it either.”

“Think of what?” Emily asked, wiping a trail of blood from her nose.

“Those are Equites. The masks were to help with your… well… scent,” Chevalier explained.

She looked horrified, “I ashed friends?”

“It’s ok!” Maleth said, trying to smile. “Damon!”

“Yes, Elder?” he asked, looking around, his mask securely in place.

“Revive those,” he told him, pointing to the ash on the floor.

Damon frowned, “Was she attacked?”

“I killed them,” Emily whispered, and struggled to get out of bed, but Chevalier held her down.

“He can get them back, Em,” Kyle said, and nodded to Damon.

Emily reached down and pulled the I.V. out of her arm.

“Damnit, Em,” Chevalier said, grabbing her hands. “How is it you keep doing that?”

Chevalier glanced quickly at Damon, and pulled Emily’s face toward him, “Look at me.”

She tried to turn her head when she heard screams from behind her, but he held her, “What’s going on?”

“Damon is bringing them back, it’s ok.”

“I’m back, aren’t I?”

He nodded, “We had to. I’ll explain it later.”

Tears welled up in her eyes, “You promised to let me go.”

He nodded, “I know… and you can as soon as you believe me.”

Chevalier heard a hiss from behind Emily, and he glared.

“Get them out of here,” he ordered, when he realized that the newly revived heku were without masks. The doctor crouched to attack just as Mark tackled him and pulled him out of the room. Kyle and Maleth were able to struggle the others out also and shut the door behind them.

“I can’t stay here,” she whispered, looking into his eyes.

“Emily, tell me one thing… do you love me?” he asked. “I need you to be honest with me.”

A tear fell down her cheek, “I don’t want to.”

“Do you?”

She nodded and wrapped her arms around him, pressing her lips to his. His hands wrapped around her and pulled her closer. Emily moved away from him, crying.

“What?” he asked her, softly.

“I don’t want to. It’ll be easier when I leave if I don’t love you,” she said painfully.

“Then don’t leave.”

“I have to.”

“No you don’t. Give us another chance. We’ll make things better,” he promised.

Emily laid her head down on his shoulder, “My head hurts so badly, I can’t think.”

“Let the doctor come in and give you something.”

“I can’t be knocked out.”

“Yes you can. We’ll be here with you.”

Emily turned when the doctor walked back in with his mask on, “I’m so sorry, Emily.”

She shrugged and watched the needle in his hand.

“What is that?” she asked, wide eyed.

“Pain medicine. You have a concussion from the car wreck, and I still don’t know what all the other did,” he said, coming closer.

Emily tensed, “Go away.”

The doctor stopped. He’d felt the burning pain of her abilities, and didn’t plan on having a repeat.

“It’s up to you, Emily. I won’t force you, but we know you’re hurting.”

“No medicine,” she said, and the doctor bowed and left. She was surprised. Normally, Chevalier told them to just do it quickly. This time, he followed her wishes.

“I just want to sleep,” she said, lying down.

“Eat first, I’ll get you something.” Chevalier stood up and gave an order to one of the guards, and when he returned, she was fast asleep.

Chapter 7 - The New Palace

Emily sat up in bed and looked around the room. Chevalier was sitting on one of the chairs, looking into the fireplace. She saw a domed tray by him and her stomach turned. She was suddenly feeling exceptionally hungry. She slid out of bed and took a few steps before the world moved out from under her. She saw blackness creeping into her vision and felt herself falling. Strong arms wrapped around her and put her in bed.

She wrapped her arms around his neck, “Don’t go.”

He smiled and sat down, pulling her onto his lap as he cradled her, “You shouldn’t get up. The doctor says you have a concussion.”

“Just don’t let go,” she said, and leaned her head against his shoulder.

“How are you feeling?” he asked, kissing the top of her head.

“My head hurts,” she whispered, and tightened her grip on him.

“I’m not going anywhere, Em.”

“Are the heku I ashed going to be ok?” she whispered.

She felt him chuckle, “Yes, they have a new respect for you now though.”

“I feel bad about that.”

“Don’t, it was our fault. I didn’t think what that would look like when you woke up.” He sounded partly amused.

“Where’s Allen?”

“He’s down with Sam eating breakfast… which reminds me, you need to eat.” He tried to let go, but she tightened her grip.

“I can eat later,” she told him, and tightened her grip.

“I can hold you later, too. You need to eat,” he said, grinning.

“I’m still leaving,” she whispered, and his face grew serious.

“Will you stay if you set the rules?” he asked, looking down at her.

“That won’t change things.” She sat up and looked into his eyes. He studied the intensity of the green in hers.

“What will change things?”

“Nothing can change it. It’s been this way for too long.” She laid her forehead against his chest.

“Give us a shot, Em, please.”

“There will always be someone out to feed off of me, and what if this baby is a girl? What if she ashes half the staff and gets fed off of herself?” Emily leaned her head up to look at him again.

“It’s going to be that way anywhere. At least here, we can try to protect you.”

“By putting us under lock and key?”

“No, I won’t do that again. I see now, that all we did was drive you stronger to get away.” He smiled and kissed her.

“The Ancient is still out there?” she asked.

Chevalier nodded, “We’ve taken precautions.”

“Like what?”

“Like that,” he said, nodding to the shadows in the corner.

Emily looked over and gasped, “There’s someone over there?”

“No one, not even I, can be alone with you. The Ancient can only control one of us at a time, and Elder or not, he has permission to stop me if I try to hurt you.”

Emily looked toward the shadows, “Come here.”

Chevalier nodded and a heku stepped out, wearing a mask. Emily frowned, “I don’t like the masks.”

“We didn’t know what else to do,” he said.

“Who are you?” she asked the masked heku.

“It’s Mark, Ma’am,” he said, bowing slightly.

She nodded, and he moved back into the shadows. She pulled her nightgown down to cover her thighs. She hadn’t worried about it when it was just Chevalier, she thought they were alone.

Chevalier tried to kiss her, but she dodged him, “We’re not alone,” she whispered.

He chuckled, “Mark will be discreet, Em.”

“I don’t care,” she said, and crawled off of his lap.

He growled and grabbed for her, but she slipped out from under his fingers and ran for the bathroom. Chevalier and Mark sat waiting for her for a while before Chevalier got up and went to the bathroom.

“Em?” he said, knocking.

“Go away,” she told him, strained.

He sighed, “Sprite and crackers?”

“Please,” she whispered.

Chevalier ordered to the air, and within seconds, cold Sprite and a box of crackers were on the table. He took the glass and some crackers, and knocked on the door.

“Go away.”

He grinned and opened the door. Emily was lying beside the toilet with her eyes closed. Chevalier sat down beside her and leaned against the wall.

“I said, go away.”

“I heard you… try a cracker,” he said, holding it out. She snatched it from his hand and put it on the floor beside her.

She clutched her stomach, “Leave.”

“Emily, this doesn’t bother me,” he said, and held her hair for her as she leaned over the toilet. When she was done, she laid on the floor, pressing her cheek against the cold tiles.

“How long did this last before?” he asked, handing her the glass of Sprite.

“I don’t know. I never knew what day it was,” she said, taking the glass and setting it down beside her.

“Those work better if you eat them,” he chuckled.

“You first.” She handed the glass to him.

He raised an eyebrow, “If I drink some, will you?”

She looked over at him and smiled, “Sure.”

Chevalier winced and smelled the contents of the glass, and then braced himself. He heard Emily giggle as he took a long drink. He immediately spit it out over the bathroom floor, and wiped his tongue with a towel, sputtering. The door flew open and Mark looked in, frowning.

“What’s going on?” he asked.

Emily grinned and took a bite of cracker.

“I wasn’t abusing her… this time she was abusing me,” Chevalier said, still grimacing.

“I don’t think that’s against the rules.” Mark was watching him, cautiously.

“Try this,” Chevalier said, handing Mark the Sprite.

Mark looked down into the glass.

“Seriously, try it,” Chevalier said again.

Mark took the glass, unsure if that was a serious order. He smelled the contents and Emily giggled again when he made the same face Chevalier made when he smelled it.

“Go, Boy,” Chevalier encouraged, grinning.

Mark put the glass to his lips and hesitantly tipped it back and immediately began to gag. He dropped the glass and it shattered on the floor, sending Sprite and shards of glass across the bathroom. He ran for the door, and Emily heard it open and slam.

“That was mean,” she said to Chevalier, taking another bite.

“I need to go,” Chevalier said, getting to his feet.

“Are you going to be sick?” she asked, slightly amused.

He groaned and ran from the bathroom. Emily crawled to the door just in time to see him disappear. She turned to the bathroom and grabbed a towel, then began sweeping up the glass.

“Ma’am?” she heard from behind her. She turned to see two heku in masks watching her, “We have someone coming to clean that up.”

“Who are you?” she asked, kneeling by the broken glass.

“You don’t know us… we’re just here until your personal guards can be summoned. The… erm… Elder and Mark needed to go feed,” he stammered, nervously.

“Because of Sprite!?” she gasped, and suddenly found that incredibly funny. She sat down on the floor and laughed as the heku watched her curiously.

Emily went to stand up and cut her palm on a piece of glass. As her blood hit the floor, she looked up fearfully.

One of the guards had his hand out to help her up, “Can’t smell a thing, you’re ok,” he said.

She took his hand and stood up, grabbing her crackers on the way out. There was already a glass of Sprite on the table. She headed for it, but

felt the world begin to spin again and soon found herself in the arms of a strange heku.

He sat her down in bed and moved away from her quickly. The other guard came up and handed her the glass of Sprite, “The... erm... Elder… he said… that you… um… owe him some… of that.”

She nodded and drank a sip, “That I do.”

Emily put the glass down suddenly and pressed her hands into her temples, moaning.

“Ma’am?” one of the guards said, nervously.

When she didn’t answer, she heard them summon the doctor. She couldn’t complain. The pounding in her head made the voices sound funny, and she couldn’t focus her eyes. The world began to spin and she screamed when the pain intensified. Her scream echoed through the walls of the palace, and guards from all stations blurred to her room. The first to arrive was Kyle.

“Emily?” he said, sitting down by her and looking at the guards. “What happened?”

“She was just drinking and she started screaming. I swear, nothing happened,” he stammered out.

“Emily?” he asked again, but she was writhing with pain and moaning.

“Where’s that doctor?” one of the guards yelled.

“I’m here,” he said. “Clear this room.”

All of the guards except Kyle and the two from earlier left the room. The doctor looked into her eyes with his flashlight and felt along her neck and spine. He frowned as she fell silent onto the bed.

“What’s wrong?” Kyle asked.

The doctor shook his head, “Do you really want to know?”

Kyle frowned, “Of course I do.”

“She has multiple concussions, one recent, from the car wreck, and a few… a few that are older.” He looked over at the wall.

Kyle sighed, “From the Ancient?”

The doctor nodded, “She has to have had a headache for weeks, but I’m guessing didn’t tell anyone or thought it was the pregnancy. It’s going to take a while before it can heal all the way. The pain shouldn’t be this bad, though. I need to do some research.”

“What do we do?”

“I need to get an I.V. in her. She’s not getting enough fluid. I would feel better if she’d take pain meds, too.” He looked over at Emily as she slept.

“Do it, I’ll make sure the I.V stays, and I’ll take the blame for the medicine,” Kyle said. Within five minutes, she had an I.V. in and fluid was dripping quickly into her vein. The doctor left just as Kyle sat by her side and wrapped a strong hand around the I.V. sight.

Kyle sat motionless for hours as he watched her sleep. He smelled the acrid medicine coming from her, but ignored it. She was sleeping soundly and the I.V. was putting color back into her.

“What happened?” Chevalier asked, blurring into the room.

“She got a headache and passed out again,” Kyle explained. “The medicine was my idea, she can get mad at me for that. The doctor said her concussion is really bad. It’s going to take time and sleep to heal. He also said something else is going on, but he can’t tell what.”

“Is he trying to find out?”

“Yes, but he said it can take time.”

Chevalier just nodded and saw Kyle’s hand wrapped tightly around her arm at the I.V.

“Did she really make you drink Sprite?” Kyle asked, and wrinkled his nose.

“That stuff should be banned. It’s awful,” he said, sitting down. A rustling in the corner made him look up.

“You are relieved. There are two of us in here now,” he said, just as someone blurred out of the room.

“I’ve always wondered what that tastes like. It smells bad,” Kyle said, looking over at her glass.

“Have at it. I’m sure she won’t mind,” Chevalier chuckled.

“No thanks, I’m full.”

“I had to feed three times before I got that taste out of my mouth.”

Kyle just grinned and nodded, “I bet.”

Emily slept through the night. She began to wake up as the medicine wore off and then sat up and looked around the room.

“Good morning,” Kyle said, smiling at her, with his hand still tightly grasp around her I.V.

“Where’s Allen?” she asked, her head still slightly foggy.

“Sam has him at breakfast.” Chevalier took her hand.

Emily jerked her hand away as her eyes fell on the I.V. and she pulled at Kyle's fingers, "Let go."

"Not this time, doctor's orders," Kyle said, watching her.

"Em, how's your headache?" Chevalier asked, trying to distract her.

"Let go or I'll ash you," she said angrily.

"Emily!" Chevalier yelled, surprised.

Kyle just grinned, "Ash me if you want, but I'm not letting go."

Chevalier put his hand under Emily's chin, and moved her face toward him, "Calm down."

"Get it out," her eyes were furious.

"It's an I.V., that's all. You need fluid."

"Now"

"No"

Emily laid back down against the bed and stared at the ceiling.

Kyle looked at Chevalier, and he shrugged.

She sat up suddenly, and swung her legs out of bed, then stood up on shaky legs.

“Emily, lay down,” Kyle said, still holding her arm.

“Bathroom,” she said, and began to walk quickly toward the bathroom. Kyle grabbed the I.V. bag and went with her. Halfway there, Emily paused and collapsed. Kyle caught her just as she was about to hit the floor. Chevalier was at their side in an instant.

Emily reached both hands to her chest, then swiftly pulled out her I.V. and looked up with a glare, “There, now I can go alone.”

Kyle sighed and set her down, then she disappeared into the bathroom and shut the door.

“I can’t believe she did that,” Kyle said, wide eyed.

Chevalier chuckled, “I can.”

“What’s with her and needles?” Kyle asked, sitting on the chair by the fireplace.

Chevalier shrugged, “I don’t know.”

Emily emerged a short time later, fully dressed. Her hair was pulled back into a long French braid that fell down her back.

“Going somewhere?” Kyle asked her.

“I keep telling you, I’m leaving.” She sat down to slip on her shoes, but paused to press her palms to her eyes and then stood up.

“Headaches again?” Chevalier asked, wrapping his arms around her waist.

She nodded and leaned her head against his chest.

“Do you have to go right now?”

“I’ll be right back, ok? I need to clear my head,” she said, pulling away and grabbing a cracker.

“Where are you going then?” Kyle asked.

Emily turned to him, “To express my new freedom.”

Kyle looked at Chevalier, and he nodded, “We’ll wait here for you.”

She grabbed her riding gloves and walked out of the room.

“We can’t let her go alone,” Kyle reminded him.

“We have to if we want her to stay,” Chevalier said, obviously scared about her outing.

Emily saw the curious looks as she walked through the castle alone. Everyone she saw was wearing the hospital mask, and the entire castle

smelled like menthol. She went into the dining room and smiled at Allen.

“Want to go for a ride?” she asked him, and he nodded, hurrying to finish his breakfast.

“I’ll go with you,” Sam said, standing up.

“No, you’ll go wait in the bedroom with the other mother hens,” she said, smiling. She always enjoyed being able to boss him around. It was some consolation after what he did to her.

Sam nodded and reluctantly went up to the bedroom to wait.

“You too, huh?” Kyle asked when Sam walked into the room.

“She called us mother hens,” Sam said, sitting down with the heku to wait.

Chevalier chuckled.

Emily took Allen’s hand and walked out to the stables. She looked around, and things looked the same. Someone had kept up with the horses, and for that she was grateful. After slipping a bridle on Patra, Emily led her out and hoisted herself up, bareback. She then reached one arm down and pulled Allen up, putting him in front of her.

“Emily?” she heard from behind her and turned.

“Hi, Mark,” she said, smiling. He didn’t have a mask on because it wasn’t needed outside.

“Shall I go with you?” he asked.

“No, wait for me in my bedroom,” she ordered, and he sulked off as she watched him.

Mark walked into her bedroom and frowned at the others gathered, then heard Chevalier laugh.

Kyle sighed, “I guess you join us.”

Mark sat down hesitantly, “What’s up?”

“She’s expressing her freedom,” Chevalier said, still laughing.

“By the time she’s done, you’ll need a bigger room,” Sam mumbled, and watched the fire.

Emily kicked Patra into a trot, and breathed deeply of the fresh air. There was something exhilarating about being out by herself in a city surrounded with danger, and she smiled as she kicked the mare into a gallop through the city streets. She soon found herself up on the green

hills outside of the city again. She stopped Patra on the ridge and looked over the quiet city.

“Run!” Allen said, kicking Patra with his little feet. The mare snorted and stood still.

“In a sec, Allen,” Emily said, shutting her eyes and taking in the sounds around her.

“Emily,” she heard the whisper behind her, and she turned and saw a heku in the signature red robes of the Encala.

Emily turned Patra around quickly to face him. He had his hands up toward her in a gesture of peace.

“One more step and I’ll ash you,” she warned.

“I haven’t come to hurt you. I’ve come with an offer,” he said, lowering his hands.

She looked at him carefully, “What offer?”

He smiled, warmly, “I come to offer you your dreams.”

“I’m listening,” she said, pulling Allen closer to her.

“We’ve been watching you, and we know what you want, Emily. Join the Encala, and we will give it all to you.”

“What exactly do I want?”

“Freedom of course,” he said, still smiling.

“Seems to me like I have freedom.”

“For now, but they will take it away, will they not?”

She shrugged.

“I have many things to offer you. All you have to do is come with me, and live in the Encala palace… of course… we could give you your own home, perhaps a small farm outside of Paris? Or maybe Rome?”

Her eyes narrowed as he spoke.

“We offer you permanent freedom. No more being treated like a child. You are an adult, you don’t need a babysitter. We offer you free reign of our entire kingdom, every heku at your command. No more being restrained or forbidden, no more tricks, or deceit.”

“You seem to know a lot about this,” she said, skeptically.

“I know more than you can imagine. You are Encala by blood. It’s your destiny to return home,” he said, watching her.

Emily frowned, “What do you mean Encala by blood?”

“Lies, Emily, they have been lying to you from the start. Your father was Encala, an Elder actually.”

“My dad was mortal,” she corrected him.

“No, he was, in fact, Encala. Allen was your mother’s husband, but you were conceived by means of an Encala Elder. One that became smitten with your mother… she didn’t know it. He had the ability to erase her mind.”

“You’re lying,” she snapped at him.

“I’m not, I am telling the truth. After you were born, he became drawn more and more to her blood until… well sadly… he couldn’t stop. We were saddened when he took the life of your mother and your brother, but you stopped him, and we knew for certain that you were Encala.”

“I don’t have a brother. You obviously have the wrong person,” she said, still watching him.

“Don’t you ever wonder why your abilities are so strong? It’s because you have the blood of two heku running through you... the original of Lord Ulrich, and then your father’s blood.” He stayed still and watched her, never taking a step or moving at all.

Emily's mind whirled. Things from her childhood began to make sense and it infuriated her.

"You belong with your family. We won't lie to you as the Equites have. It's a shame that even your husband lied to you about such things. Of course, bonds are easily broken." He smiled warmly.

"Chevalier knows?" she asked, mostly to herself.

The Encala nodded.

"Come with me," she said, turning Patra back toward the city.

The Encala hesitated, "They will kill me the second they see me."

"No, they won't, not if I tell them not to. If they try, I'll ash them," she said, angrily.

The Encala smiled. He knew he'd gotten through to her, "As you wish then."

As they passed into the city, there were shouts and gasps from the houses and stores when they saw Emily on horseback and the Encala walking calmly at her side. By the time they reached the palace, the city had been shut up tightly. Emily was glad no alarm was sounded. She wanted to be able to walk through the palace without being surrounded by guards.

She slipped off of Patra and took Allen by the hand and held her other hand out for the Encala. He looked at her hand, then to her eyes.

“It’ll be easier for me to control,” she said. He nodded and took her soft hand in his.

Emily approached the front door guards as they crouched low and hissed.

“Stand back, he’s with me,” she said, and they looked at each other, shocked.

It was easier than she thought to get through the palace. All she had to do was threaten any Equites she came to, and they backed down. It was obvious to her, that Chevalier had given them orders to obey her at all costs. When she got to her bedroom, she stepped inside and all eyes fell to her.

“Welcome back,” Chevalier said. He froze and crouched when an Encala walked in casually behind her.

“He’s with me,” she said angrily at the Equites who were crouched and ready to attack.

“Sam, take Allen,” she said, and Allen walked over to him. Sam picked him up and hurried from the room.

“If you attack him, I’ll ash you before you touch him,” she said, shutting the door behind her.

“Emily…” Kyle said, still crouched, his voice turning into a hiss.

“Stop it,” she yelled, glaring at them.

Chevalier was the first to stand back straight, but his eyes didn’t leave the enemy standing in his room.

“Are you going to explain about your… friend?” Chevalier asked, motioning for the others to stand down.

Emily stood in front of the Encala protectively, and faced Chevalier, “Who is my father?”

“Emily, I can explain,” Chevalier said, but she held up her hand.

“Who is my father?” she asked again.

His shoulders fell, “I don’t know who he was.”

“I do, he was an Encala Elder,” she said, growing angrier.

“Allen was your Dad. He raised you and loved you,” Chevalier whispered.

“How did my mother die?” she asked, taking a step toward him.

“She was killed by the heku,” Chevalier sighed. He knew this would only drive a wedge further between them.

“And my… my brother?”

“Same.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” she asked, balling her hands into fists.

“It wasn’t important. You know who your family is.”

“You lied to me.” Her eyes were hurt.

“That was in Colorado. I had forgotten about it.” He tried to convince her. His heart ached at the pain in her eyes, the betrayal, and he noticed the Encala standing behind her looking calm and relaxed.

“What else are you keeping from me?”

“Nothing, I honestly had forgotten about that. Colorado was hectic, and we were just getting to know each other.”

“Let’s go, Emily,” the Encala said, touching her arm.

Chevalier tensed and Mark took a step in her direction.

“Get back,” she said to Mark, and he froze.

Emily suddenly dropped to her knees with a scream and grabbed the sides of her head with her hands. The Encala took a shocked step backwards as the Equites heku descended on her. Chevalier scooped her up and laid her in bed as she writhed in pain. Mark took the Encala by the arm and held him in place. The Encala watched Emily carefully.

“Stop them,” Emily screamed.

“Who?” Chevalier asked, and then yelled for the doctor.

Emily fell silent, and her hands dropped to the bed as her body relaxed into sleep.

“What did you do?” Mark scowled at the Encala.

“I just touched her arm, I swear,” he said, nervously.

“Why were you even with her?”

“Just to talk to her… nothing more,” he said, looking around at the angry Equites.

“Put him in prison for now. Stop by the interrogation chamber, see what you can find out,” Chevalier ordered.

Mark pulled the Encala out of the bedroom. Chevalier put his arm under Emily’s shoulders and sat her up.

“Emily,” he said, touching her face lightly.

Her eyes fluttered open slowly, “My head.”

“I know, you need to drink.” He put the glass to her lips, but she pushed it away.

“Drink,” he said, a little sterner, and she took a sip.

“Stop them,” she said again, shutting her eyes. She leaned her head against the crook of his neck.

“Stop who?” he asked, and pulled her into his lap. He looked down at her face and she was asleep.

Emily didn’t wake up until late that night. Chevalier was still holding her, and the doctor and Kyle were in the room sitting quietly.

She opened her eyes and reached out for the glass. He handed it to her and she took a long drink.

“How’s the headache?” the doctor asked her.

“Peachy,” she snapped, and sat the glass back down.

Emily crawled out of Chevalier’s lap and stumbled to the bathroom. They watched her and sat back down when they heard the shower turn on.

“Who is, ‘them’?” Chevalier looked at Kyle.

“Maybe the Valle, the ones that had her before?” Kyle asked, shrugging.

Servants delivered a steaming pile of pancakes just before Emily came back out. She was dressed again and her hair hung down loosely. She grabbed a pancake and took a bite, then headed for the door.

“Em?” Kyle asked her.

She turned to him.

“Where are you going?”

“None of your business,” she said, and turned around.

“You should stay here,” the doctor told her.

“Yeah? Well make me,” she snapped, and disappeared out the door.

Emily went immediately down into the prison. The guards bowed to her and stepped back out of the way when she entered.

“Where’s the Encala they just brought down?”

“Third row, middle of the cell’s on the left,” one of them said politely.

Emily followed his directions and came face-to-face with the Encala again. He stood up and smiled at her.

“I’m glad to see you’re ok,” he said.

“I’m fine,” Emily said, and then watched as he turned to ash.

She walked out of the cell area, calling over her shoulder, “Clean-up on aisle three.”

She entered the bedroom and grabbed her suitcase.

“Can you give us just a few weeks?” Chevalier asked, putting his hand gently on her arm.

“No”

“Are you leaving with the Encala then?” He fought to keep his voice calm.

“No, I ashed him,” she said, disappearing into the bathroom.

“You… you ashed him?”

Emily started throwing things into her suitcase, “Just now.”

Kyle’s eyes were wide, “You just walked down to the prison and ashed him?”

“Yes”

Chevalier grinned and shrugged at Kyle.

“Em?” Chevalier said. He stopped her, mid-packing, and made her look at him.

“When you say ‘stop them’, who do you mean?” Chevalier asked her.

She frowned, “What do you mean?”

“During the headaches… you say ‘stop them’.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” She pulled away from him and went into the closet.

Chevalier frowned, “Emily, the headaches.”

“What about them?” she asked, coming out with an armful of t-shirts.

“You scream to ‘stop them’. Is it the headache you want stopped?”

Emily sighed and turned to him, “I’ve had a headache since you threw me up against the wall, and not once have I ever asked you to stop them.”

He winced and looked angrily at the floor.

“Not those headaches. The really bad ones, the ones that you scream during,” Kyle said to break the silence.

Emily shook her head, “I need to get out of here. You are all delusional.”

“He’s not kidding. You scream and grab your head, and beg for someone to ‘stop them’,” Chevalier said, putting a hand on her shoulder to stop her from moving.

“Emily, please, just stay until the headaches go away,” Kyle asked, pleading.

“I don’t think it’s going away. I’ve had headaches for weeks.” She looked up at Chevalier. Her deep green eyes filling with tears, “I have to go… now.”

“Why?”

Emily looked at the heku in the room, “Go away.”

“We can’t leave,” Kyle said.

“Get out, now,” she said to them again.

“They can’t go. I won’t risk hurting you again,” he said, touching the tear that fell down her cheek.

Emily turned to Kyle and the doctor, “Ashing in three… two…”

They looked nervously at Chevalier and when he nodded, they blurred out of the room.

“One…” She turned to Chevalier and softened her voice. “If I don’t go now, I won’t be able to leave.”

“If it’s so hard then don’t.” He pulled her close to him.

She buried her face in his chest, “I don’t have a choice.”

“Yes, you do.”

Emily put her hands on the side of Chevalier’s face and kissed him passionately. He picked her up and laid her gently in bed, then turned his head to the side and yelled, “Scram.”

A previously unnoticed heku guard blurred from the room.

“Stay, please, just until we figure out the headaches,” Chevalier asked, as he looked deep into her eyes.

“They aren’t that bad,” she said, kissing his shoulder lightly.

“You aren’t remembering the worst of them. You scream and then sleep when it’s over.” He pulled her close to him under the covers.

“If I don’t go now, I’ll never be able to,” she said, tracing the contours of his chest with her finger.

“I love you.”

“I know, but there are so many lies, so much deceit and control.”

“No more, I promise.” He began to kiss her again.

“Is it true? Am I an Encala?” she asked, seriously.

“No, it’s not true. Factioning isn’t born in you, it’s a choice.”

“But everything else he said is true?”

Chevalier nodded.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” she asked, propping herself up on her elbow.

“I couldn’t stand to see the pain in your eyes when I told you. You love Allen. Nothing will take that away, and I saw no reason to even shadow that.”

She nodded.

“So tell me why you didn’t tell me about the baby.”

Emily gave a crooked smile, “That’s obvious isn’t it?”

“What can I do to get you to stay?”

“Nothing”

“You’re driving me insane, you know that? I can’t handle being away from you, not knowing if you’re safe.” He kissed her lightly.

“I can’t stay.” She sat up, but his strong hands pulled her back into bed.

“Something’s going on. The headaches aren’t from the concussion… you need to believe me and stay until we figure them out.”

“I told you, if I don’t leave now, then I won’t be able to leave.”

“Why?” he asked, brushing her hair away from her shoulder.

“Because I love you, and I’m afraid to be away from you. It scares me to face the mortal world again, to raise Allen by myself. It scares me to not know where you are or if you’re safe,” she whispered.

Chevalier smiled, softly, “That doesn’t make sense.”

“It does because it’s better for Allen, and it’s better for the Equites, if I go.”

“How do you figure?”

“Allen doesn’t know anything but the heku way of life. He needs kindergarten and trips to the park. He will have no chance at a normal life if we stay.”

“Why can’t the heku way of life be his normal life?” Chevalier asked.

“He’s mortal.”

“So? He’s mine, he can stay with me.”

“And find a heku wife? Have heku friends that are hundreds of years older than he is?” She couldn’t make him understand. She could tell by the look in his eyes.

“Why not? Is that so bad? I don’t see why normal can’t be my world.”

“Because he’s mortal.”

“So are you.”

“No, I’m somewhere trapped in the middle.”

“So Allen aside, why is it better for the Equites if you leave?” This was his most pressing question. He hated when she tried to protect the heku.

“You know why. The Valle and the Encala aren’t going to stop. How long before they form an alliance and come wipe out the Equites, all because of me?”

“Stop it,” he said, sternly.

“What?”

“Stop trying to protect us. If they didn’t invade over you, it would be something else. We’ve been at war for thousands of years. You leaving won’t change anything.”

“It will. It will change the fact that I won’t be to blame, and maybe that invasion will be later rather than sooner.”

“You leaving will cause it to be sooner. They will keep looking for you, and when they find you, I will come and get you. Me and the entire Equites faction,” he said, and kissed her forehead.

“Which is why I need to go now… so you can get over me before that happens.”

He chuckled, “I don’t think it’ll be that easy.”

“I don’t want to go,” she said, slipping out of the bed and wrapping a blanket around herself.

“Damnit, Emily, then don’t,” he said, frustrated. He watched her disappear into the bathroom.

Emily came out a few minutes later, dressed. She looked over at Chevalier sitting on the edge of the bed, and then the heku in the corner.

“I can make you stay,” he whispered.

Emily smiled, “But you won’t.”

Emily groaned, put her hand over her stomach, and ran back into the bathroom, slamming the door.

“Should I get the doctor?” the strange heku said from the corner.

“Nope, just more Sprite and crackers,” Chevalier told him, taking what was left of the crackers to the bathroom door. He knocked quietly.

He waited a few minutes and then opened the door without permission. Emily was sitting on the floor by the toilet, leaning against the wall with her eyes closed.

He sat down beside her and took her hand.

“Do you think marching naked into a Valle City would get me killed? That’d stop the morning sickness,” Emily asked with a slight smile.

“Hell, Em, that’d get you killed here,” he chuckled.

“Two weeks… then you’ll stop asking me to stay,” she said, her eyes still closed.

“Just give me two weeks,” he promised.

“And you’ll buy me my own car?”

“Anything you want.” He smiled, two weeks gave him enough time.

“I shouldn’t have ashed him,” she said, before grabbing a cracker from him and taking a bite.

Chevalier laughed, “I can’t believe you did it.”

“I think I let my hormones get the best of me. He was irritating me,” she said, sitting cross-legged on the floor.

“Remind me never to irritate you.” He laughed.

“You sure you don’t want to just kill me now? I bet I taste good,” she said, leaning her cheek against the cool wall.

“Tempting… but I think not.” He watched her, and in that instant, she lost all of the color in her face.

Chevalier opened the door a bit, and stuck his hand out. When he brought it back, he was holding a cold glass of Sprite.

“Here,” he said, handing it to her.

“You don’t want any?” She smiled and took a drink.

“I don’t know how you handle it.”

“It’s pretty good, actually.”

“You should try blood.”

“Maybe I will someday,” she said, sipping the Sprite.

“That, I want to see.”

“I hate when you do that, by the way.”

“What?”

“Hold your hand out and get what you want without even asking.”

“I asked.”

“When?” She eyed him suspiciously.

“Just before I opened the door.”

“You did not.”

He grinned, “You just couldn’t hear it, but I did.”

“It’s irritating.”

“You can do it, too… you won’t be able to hear them answer, but you can still ask.” He raised an eyebrow.

“I can?”

“Yes”

Emily sat up and looked at the door, “How?”

“What is it you want? Don’t say it… not even a whisper… just think it.”

Emily shut her eyes and then opened them and nodded.

“Ok… now, in the quietest voice you can use… too low for even you to hear it… ask for it.” He watched her amused.

Emily bit her bottom lip and grinned, “This is stupid.”

“Just do it.”

Emily’s lips moved, but no sound came out that she could hear. She grinned as Chevalier began to laugh, “You asked for it.”

There was a knock on the door and she frowned.

“Who is it?”

“I have what you requested,” the strange voice said.

“No way!” Emily yelled, and crawled to the door. She opened it and the heku handed her a black and white ball of fur. She shut the door and sat back as the puppy licked her face.

“If you told me you wanted a puppy, I would have given you one.”

“I don’t want a puppy… I tried to think of the one thing no one would be able to bring me,” she said, holding the puppy close to her and petting him.

Chevalier leaned his head back and laughed.

“Where did they get it?” she asked, holding him up and looking into his precious face. She guessed he was no more than 18 weeks old, a Border collie, her favorite dog.

“I don’t know. I’m not the one that got it,” he said, watching her. “I’ll take it back to them though.”

Emily pulled the puppy away from him and glared, “He’s mine.”

“You said you didn’t want a puppy.”

“I do, his name is Ford,” she said, kissing the top of the puppy’s head.

“Ford?” he asked.

“Yes… get it… now I have a Chevy and a Ford.” She grinned and Chevalier shook his head. Emily put the puppy down and pressed her palms into her eyes.

“Headache?”

She nodded as the puppy pulled at the hem on her pants. Chevalier picked him up and heard a low, tiny growl.

“What did you do to him?” Emily asked, looking at Chevalier and taking the puppy from him.

“I didn’t do anything,” Chevalier looked at the puppy, suspiciously. His hackles were raised, and his tiny teeth were showing, but he was watching the wall of the bathroom.

Emily screamed as her back arched against the cold bathroom tiles, and her hands dug at the sides of her head. The bathroom suddenly filled with heku guards eyeing Chevalier suspiciously. He crawled to her and scooped her into his arms. He ignored the guards and laid her down on the bed, taking her hands to keep her from hurting herself.

Everyone looked over as a tiny howl erupted from the puppy and he started to paw at his ears.

“Stop them!” Emily screamed, and the guards looked around, trying to find who she needed saved from.

“Who, Em?” Chevalier asked, frantically.

“Stop them, please.” Her eyes locked on his and he saw the fear.

When the puppy began to bark furiously, one of the guards picked him up and locked him in the bathroom, out of the way.

“I won’t do it,” she screamed, as her body writhed in pain.

“Do what, talk to me,” Chevalier said, watching her.

As suddenly as it started, it stopped, and she fell silent on the bed. The room became eerily peaceful as the heku looked around at one another.

Emily opened her eyes slowly and looked around the room, “How… how did I get here?”

“Tell me, quickly. What are you refusing to do?” Chevalier asked her.

“Refusing? Did I refuse something?” she asked, and sat up. She looked around for her glass and a guard handed it to her.

“My head,” she said after a long drink. “I need some ibuprofen.”

Within a minute, a guard appeared and handed her a bottle. She took four of the pills and looked around the room, “Where’s Ford?”

Chevalier looked to the bathroom door, “I don’t think he likes me.”

“Why? What did you do?” she asked, accusingly.

“I didn’t do anything!” Chevalier said, and told the guards to let him out. The puppy ran into the room and began to chase his tail, “See, he’s fine… and as smart as ever.”

Emily frowned, “Be nice.”

She set the glass down and laid back, then sat up quickly, looking around.

She blushed, “Why are you all in here?”

“Disperse,” Chevalier ordered, and the guards blurred from her room, except for the one in the corner.

“What do you remember?” he asked her.

Her eyes were closed, and she spoke softly, “We were in the bathroom and Ford growled at you.”

“That’s it? Nothing after?”

She shook her head, “I’m so tired.”

He sighed, “Rest, Em.”

Emily only napped for a few hours, and when she woke up, her headache was down to a dull throb. She sat up and ate a few crackers before standing up. Her room was empty, so she was able to throw on some clothing out in the bedroom. She pulled her shoes on, picked up Ford, and left her room.

As she made her way down the staircase, she saw a large gathering of heku guards and they all turned to look at her. Chevalier and Kyle were among them.

“Feeling better?” Chevalier asked her, and she nodded.

“I’m going shopping,” she said, handing the puppy over to Chevalier.

“Ok… give me a few minutes and I’ll go with you,” he told her, and handed the puppy over to Kyle, who looked at him confused.

“Nope… taking… him,” she said, pointing to a random heku guard, “and… him.” She pointed at another. The two chosen heku looked at Chevalier curiously.

“Ok,” he said, and nodded to them that they could go.

“You have to change though… jeans and t-shirts, I’ll wait for you.” The guards looked again at Chevalier nervously, and he grinned and then nodded. Guards weren’t to be out of uniform, even for informal occasions. They both blurred off to try to find the required clothing.

“Anything else?” Chevalier asked, amused.

She put her hand out, “Your credit card.”

He reached into his back pocket, pulled out an old leather wallet, and handed her the platinum card.

“What’s the limit?” she asked, putting it in her purse.

“I don’t know… a few hundred grand.” He frowned slightly. He knew she hated to shop, and he also knew she hated to use his money. Her

small savings had dwindled over time, though, with purchases of clothing and other necessities.

She nodded, “That’s enough I guess.”

“You guess?” He laughed.

“Are you going to have me arrested if I take your Humvee?”

“Only if you disappear in it.”

“Deal, we’ll be back in a few hours.” Emily headed toward the garage as soon as the guards arrived, looking out of place and uncomfortable in their new clothes.

“Be nice to Ford!” she yelled as she walked around the corner and into the garage.

Emily crawled into the Humvee with some difficulty and complained, “Could he not find a higher car?”

She put the car into gear and then looked at the heku guards. They were looking nervous and fidgety.

“You two ok?” she asked, frowning.

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“You look like I’m going to ash you,” she said, and watched as they both flinched.

“Oh for hell’s sake… are you seriously afraid of me?”

“No, Ma’am,” they both said.

Emily put the Humvee back into park, “We’re not going until you two lighten up.”

They looked at each other and then back to Emily.

“What?” she yelled, starting to get irritated.

“Why did you choose us?” the younger one asked.

“Because I needed big guys with me… mean looking ones, and you two were as grouchy looking as they come.” She put the car back into drive and slowly pulled out of the garage.

“Will we be fighting?” one of them asked.

“In a way.”

“How many?”

“How many what?” She was watching the rear-view mirror, making sure Chevalier hadn’t sent his own backup.

“Heku… how many will we be fighting.”

Emily laughed, “We aren’t going to fight heku… you’ll see, just do as I say.”

They nodded officially and she rolled her eyes.

“You… Blondie, what’s your name?” she asked, looking at the guard sitting next to her.

“Eric,” he said, watching out the window.

“Eric, you’re my husband,” she said, and then frowned. “Can you act?”

He was frozen.

“Erm… Eric… can you act?” She glanced at him then back to the road.

“Husband?”

“Yes, and I need you to be a mean one… got it?”

“Mean?” he stammered, starting to panic.

“Yeah mean… come on… calm down, for heaven’s sake. Here’s the story. You’re my mean husband, and you don’t want me buying a new car. That’s easy right?”

He nodded and she sighed.

“You,” she said, looking at the guard in the back. “You’re my brother… what’s your name?”

“Francis, Ma’am.”

“Ok, Frank, you’re my brother, and you want me to buy a new car.”

He smiled, “Deal.”

Emily grinned, at least one of the heku was on track with her. One of the best car deals she’d ever gotten, was when she bought a new truck when Keith thought she didn’t need one. Their ensuing fight made the salesman so nervous, he gave them an insane deal just to be done with them. She pulled into the first lot she came to with the Dodge symbol on the sign, and stopped the Humvee. Before she had even gotten the keys out of the ignition, four men were running toward her.

“Better start acting,” she said, sliding out of the Humvee.

“Good morning, something we can help you with?” the first man to arrive asked. He checked behind him to make sure the others were leaving.

“Yes, I want a Durango,” she said, looking around.

“I think I can help you out, what year?”

“Next year’s model,” she said, as Eric and Frank joined her. The two heku towered over the short, skinny salesman, and he nervously adjusted his tie.

“Good, good… we have some over here,” the salesman said, and the three of them followed him across the lot. Emily elbowed Eric hard in the ribs and he jerked.

“I don’t think you need a new one, Ma’... erm… Emily,” he said, stiffly. Frank stifled a laugh and Emily frowned at Eric.

“That is a pretty nice Humvee you have there, will it be a trade in?” the salesman asked with a cheesy smile.

“Yes,” Frank said.

Emily hurried and said, “No.”

“Erm… is it then?” the salesman asked, looking back at them.

“Ignore my brother, he’s an idiot… no, we aren’t trading in the Humvee.” She tried not to laugh, but could hear Frank laughing behind her. He was having a lot of fun with this.

“Fine, fine... Here’s our base model, it has…” Emily cut him off.

“I don’t want the base model… load me up,” Emily said, smiling sweetly.

“What?” Eric said. “Show her the base model. The fully loaded is too expensive.”

Emily looked at him, impressed.

“She gets the best, Eric, only the best for my sister,” Frank said, putting his arm around her casually.

“Base model,” Eric said, dryly.

“If you ever treated her right, like she deserved, you’d get her the fully loaded model,” Frank said, letting go of Emily and pushing Eric.

Emily had to fight to control her laughter, “Stop it… show me the fully loaded one.”

The salesman was terrified. His eyes were wide as he watched the hulking heku start to push each other around. He would much rather deal with the tiny woman than her intimidating companions.

Chevalier watched the clock closely. It had been six hours since Emily left with the two guards to go shopping, and he still wasn’t picking up

any emotions or senses from her. He paced nervously across the foyer, getting angrier by the minute.

“I did not!” he heard Emily yell, and he turned to face the doors to the large garage.

“Yes you did! Oh my God, you did,” Frank said, laughing, and Emily slapped him playfully on the arm.

“At least what I did isn’t going to get us arrested… Dear Brother,” Emily said, mocking fear.

Frank’s face fell and he stood tall as Chevalier approached, “Elder,” he said, bowing slightly.

“Hi, Chev,” Emily said, smiling.

“Have fun?” Chevalier asked curiously. He watched Frank and could tell he was trying not to laugh.

“I had a blast… though I’m not sure Eric will be ok,” she said, smiling.

Frank stood perfectly still.

Emily frowned, “Chevalier, tell him to stop… we were having fun.”

Chevalier nodded at Frank, and he burst into laughter.

“What is so funny?” Chevalier asked. He couldn’t help but smile.

“Your wife is a flirt,” Frank said, and then tensed when he realized what he’d said.

“I am not!” Emily said, and blushed. “You have to be attractive to flirt.”

Frank started to say something, but stopped when he saw his Elder tense.

Frank grinned when Chevalier spoke, “What did she do?”

“She had this poor salesman wrapped around her little finger and scared to death of Eric,” Frank explained.

“Of course he was afraid of Eric. Eric was afraid to talk. Seriously… he needs acting lessons.”

“I’ll add that to the guard regime,” Chevalier said, as he buried his jealous feelings deeply.

“I finally started prompting him, that helped,” Frank admitted.

“Ooooh, is that why he started talking?” Emily nodded, finally understanding.

“You don’t think he came up with that on his own do you?” Frank asked.

“Frank tried to trade in your Humvee,” Emily said, and ducked behind Chevalier when Frank gasped at her.

“I didn’t really mean it,” Frank said, eyes wide.

“Trade it in? For what?” he turned and asked Emily.

“You promised me my own car, so you bought me one.”

“Oh and what did I buy you?”

“A Dodge Durango. Thanks too, I love it.”

“Give Eric the day off, trust me. He’s terrified you are going to kill him,” Frank said to Chevalier.

“Gah, he needs to get over it,” Emily said, as she heard the garage door shut.

“What did he do to deserve that?” Chevalier frowned.

“Emily made him play the part of her grouchy husband,” Frank said, smirking.

“Emily! It’s against orders to impersonate an Elder,” Chevalier said to her.

“He wasn’t impersonating an Elder… he was portraying my grouchy husband. It worked too, I got a killer deal,” she said, proudly.

Eric froze in the hallway when he saw Chevalier.

“Eric, come here,” Chevalier said sternly, and Emily smacked him on the arm.

“Yes… yes, Sir?” Eric was terrified.

“Go feed, Eric, you look awful,” Chevalier said, and watched Eric blur away without another word.

“Here’s your credit card. I don’t want it when the police come,” Emily said, handing him the seldom used platinum card.

“Why are the police coming?” he asked.

“That wasn’t illegal,” Frank told her.

“I’m pretty sure it’s not legal either,” Emily told him, grinning.

Chevalier sighed, “Do I want to know what you two did?”

“I… erm… well I got her a… yeah, well, a pretty good deal,” Frank said, nervously.

“A pretty good deal? I just bought a fully-loaded Dodge Durango in next year’s model for $10,000,” she explained.

Chevalier looked at Frank, surprised, “How did you do that?”

Frank sighed.

“You didn’t,” Chevalier said, shaking his head.

“He started to be a jerk to Emily, so I... intervened,” Frank explained, hoping he wasn’t in trouble.

“I need to learn how to do that,” Emily said. “I want to look someone in the eyes and change their mind, or tell them what to do. How convenient.”

“Yes, well, we normally try not to use that unless it’s an emergency,” Chevalier said, he was trying to sound stern, but was having a hard time at it.

Emily stood toe-to-toe with Chevalier and called him down to her level with a bend of her finger. He bent down toward her, and she looked deep into his eyes.

“Don’t be grouchy,” she said, widening her green eyes at him.

“That doesn’t work… Allen wants to show you something,” Chevalier said, standing up.

Emily headed up the stairs and Chevalier turned to Frank.

“How did it go?” he asked, seriously.

“Fine, Sir, nothing out of the ordinary,” Frank reported.

“Headaches?”

“She asked for some pills once, but refused to come back.”

“Not the screaming type though?”

“No, Sir,” Frank said.

“Talk to Kyle. I want you on the next cavalry unit,” Chevalier said, walking up the stairs.

“Yes, Sir,” Frank said, and blurred off to talk to the Captain.

Chapter 8 - Ford

“Get that damn dog out of here!” Chevalier growled, as he held tightly to Emily.

Kyle grabbed Ford and pushed him into the bathroom, slamming the door. He blurred back to the bed and held Emily’s legs down. She was screaming as she thrashed in pain. The last few times she had a similar episode, she managed to injure herself, so Kyle and Chevalier fought to hold her down. They were amazed at the strength the pain caused Emily to have.

“No! No!” she screamed. “You can’t make me.”

“Emily, open your eyes, look at me,” Chevalier said. He hoped if she could look into his eyes, he might be able to gain some control of her in her weakened state, but as of yet, she hadn’t done it.

“Stop them,” she screamed, and somehow managed to get one hand free for a second before Chevalier caught it again.

“Kill them,” she whispered, as her body relaxed and her hands fell limp.

“Emily, look at me... now,” Chevalier said, trying to force her to open them.

With great effort, Emily looked up at him, and in that split second, he was able to lock her gaze. Soon, her breathing matched his and he relaxed as she fell under his control. He could do this easily to any mortal except Emily, and it only worked on her if she was sick or exceedingly tired.

“Emily?” he asked. Kyle watched them intently. He’d never seen Emily under heku control.

Emily sighed, softly.

“Who do you want me to stop?” he asked, his was voice soft and calming. This trick was often used to ensure cooperation by the mortal in extremely stressful situations.

“I will kill her first,” Emily whispered. Her voice was hushed and far away.

“Who are you going to kill?” he asked, and all of his concentration was on her piercing green eyes.

Kyle jumped off of the bed the second Emily was thrown across the room and crashed against the bathroom door, ripping it from the hinges. Chevalier was only half a second behind Kyle. His concentration had been so fully on Emily, that he hadn’t seen the doctor enter the room.

Kyle grasped the doctor’s arm. The doctor hissed and broke free by twisting out of Kyle’s arms, then headed for the bathroom. Chevalier dove for him, and slammed him into the fireplace as a cloud of ash filled the bedroom. Kyle jumped into the fight as the doctor twisted Chevalier’s head violently to the side, and the sound of bones cracking echoed through the room.

Guards flooded the room, and heku from all over the palace converged on the fight, and quickly pinned the doctor down. He hissed and growled as he fought to get free. Kyle ran to the bathroom and followed the trail

of blood, stepping over the shattered door. Emily was lying half in and half out of the shower. Her shaking hand was pressed to the back of her head as blood poured onto the tile.

He knelt down by her with a towel and pressed it onto the back of her head, “Em, hold still.”

Emily was dazed and trying to crawl away from him. She pulled the towel off of the back of her head and pushed at Kyle.

“Emily, stop,” he said, and returned the towel to her head. He held his breath as much as he could. The amount of blood on the floor was beginning to trigger his predatory instincts.

“Get me a mask!” Kyle yelled at the guards, as he felt his mouth begin to salivate.

Someone placed a menthol lined mask on his face and he could relax. Emily’s shaky hand was still trying to tear the towel away.

“Get an ambulance,” he ordered, and picked Emily up off the floor. She struggled in his arms as he went into the bedroom. Chevalier was just standing up after having healed when he looked around the room and then focused on Emily. Blood was dripping down Kyle’s arm.

“Five minutes on the ambulance,” he heard a guard say from down stairs.

“General quarters, clear this palace out,” Kyle growled, and saw the guards blur away, two of them taking the doctor with them.

Chevalier was looking at Emily with confusion. The blood dripping down Kyle’s arm sent a warning through him, but the back of his throat burned and he inhaled.

“Back up!” Kyle yelled, as he took a step back with Emily still cradled in his arm.

Mark appeared in the doorway and saw Chevalier crouching slightly. He jumped and slammed into the Elder, knocking him back into the bathroom. Kyle bolted for the door and blurred down to the palace entrance. The plan had been pre-established when the mortals arrived. Any ambulance would be called to the small farmhouse outside of the city walls, where their identity could remain anonymous.

Kyle arrived at the door to the farmhouse just as the ambulance pulled up. Paramedics rushed out with a gurney and took Emily from Kyle’s arms. He crawled into the front, and after a few minutes, the orange and white ambulance sped away with sirens blaring.

Kyle watched as Emily was whisked away by the Emergency Room staff, and he went to the counter with the nurse to fill out paperwork. He

wrote down what he could and made up the rest. The fee would be paid in cash anyway, so it didn't matter.

"You can wait out here," the pretty blond nurse told him, and pointed to an old lounge with mismatched, smelly chairs.

Kyle sat down and watched for Chevalier to arrive. He was forced to turn his cell phone off, which cut him off from the palace. He waited impatiently to hear something from Emily and looked up at everyone who passed, waiting for any word. He was surprised when four police officers came into the waiting area.

They walked over to him, "You need to come with us."

Kyle nodded and stood up, then followed the officers into a small conference room.

"Sit down, Son," the officer in charge said. Kyle did as he was told and ignored the son comment. He was thousands of years older than all of them.

The officer sat down across from Kyle, "I'm Sergeant Washington, Special Victims Unit. I have some questions for you."

Kyle nodded and glanced at the other three officers. They were looking at him angrily.

“The young woman you brought in, is that your wife?”

“Yes,” Kyle said, not hesitating.

“What happened to her tonight?”

“She was bucked off of her horse,” Kyle said, watching as everything he said was being written down.

“And the bruises on her arm? Look a lot like a hand,” he said, coldly.

“I grabbed her arm when the mare acted up. I tried to get her off of the horse,” Kyle told them.

“I see… and are you aware that she has concussions… and yes, Boy, I said that in the plural. The x-rays show she has had numerous head injuries recently.”

Kyle shook his head, “She rides horses for a living, breaking them in causes a lot of injuries.”

“You are sticking with that story?”

“Of course,” Kyle said, irritated.

“How about the old rib fractures?”

“Same thing… have you ever broken in a horse? You fall off a lot, get kicked.”

“I see.” It was silent while the Sergeant wrote for a while.

“Are you aware that she checked out of a hospital in Maine, against medical advice, running from you?” The officer watched him carefully.

“That was a misunderstanding,” Kyle said, sighing.

“The report says... and I quote ‘*Emily Russo left against medical advice, quite adamant on leaving the hospital to get away from an abusive husband. The husband was extremely irate when he discovered she was gone*’.” The officer looked up at him.

“As I said, misunderstanding.”

“You scumbags always have an excuse don’t you?” the officer said, standing up.

“Excuse me?” Kyle asked, trying to control his temper.

“You’re under arrest,” the officer said, and Kyle was forced to his feet as his hands were cuffed behind him. He didn’t resist. It wasn’t his place to expose his kind. He was forcefully led to the patrol car, and looked up as Mark and Chevalier pulled up in the Humvee.

Chevalier hopped out and ran at Kyle, “What’s going on here?”

“They think I beat up your sister again,” Kyle said, looking Chevalier in the eyes as he explained his story in whispers too low for the mortals to hear.

Chevalier looked at Kyle and then glared, “You hit her? Your own wife?”

Mark was just coming up the walk and watched them curiously.

“You better hope I don’t see you after tonight,” Chevalier growled, and then stormed into the hospital with Mark close behind him.

“I hope he does find you in some dark street corner,” the officer said, and pushed Kyle into the back of the car.

Chevalier stopped at the front desk, “I’m looking for my sister, Emily Russo.”

The nurse slowly looked through papers and then pushed a button on the desk, “Go through the doors and to room number six.”

Mark and Chevalier followed her directions and walked into the room. Chevalier frowned and walked up to the bed. Emily was lying perfectly still, her head bandaged and her left arm in a cast. The doctor looked up at him, “Are you family?”

“Yes, we’re her brothers,” Chevalier said, and the doctor looked from him to Mark.

“Do you know she’s being abused by her husband?” the doctor asked, feeling Emily’s wrist.

Chevalier tensed and Mark heard a growl starting.

“No, we didn’t know,” Mark said quickly.

“She has a laceration across the back of her head, and multiple concussions in various stages of healing. She has a broken shoulder blade, that and the laceration are new for today. So…” the doctor thumbed through her file, “She has signs of a previously broken jaw, ribs, hip, femur, nose, cheek bone, ankle, at least four concussions and... well… there are signs of sexual assault, though that’s been quite a few years ago. I’ve never seen anything like this.”

Chevalier’s hands tightened into fists.

“I know you’re upset, but let the cops handle her husband… right now we need to concentrate on Emily, ok?” the doctor said, not fully understanding Chevalier’s anger.

“The baby?” Mark asked. He knew Chevalier couldn’t currently talk.

“It’s too early to tell.”

“Why isn’t she awake?” Chevalier asked, taking her hand.

“She’s sedated. She wouldn’t leave her I.V. in.” the doctor said, concerned.

“Can we have a moment?” Mark asked, and the doctor stepped out, shutting the door behind him.

“Get Kyle out of jail and get me that Ancient,” Chevalier hissed.

“I…” Mark sighed, “I can’t leave you here alone.”

Chevalier nodded, “Very well. Take the arm in the cast. Do not let go under any circumstance.”

Mark nodded and sat in a chair by her bed, holding her arm.

“I don’t have to tell you what part of that you need to keep to yourself,” Chevalier said, watching Mark closely.

Mark frowned, “No, you don’t… you killed him?”

Chevalier nodded.

Nurses came in every fifteen minutes all night to check on Emily and to adjust her medication. They often forced her eyes open and shined a bright light across them. They wrote everything down in a chart and then left with a sad smile to Chevalier and Mark.

“Maleth is here,” Mark said, breaking Chevalier’s trance. They both looked up when the Elder walked into the room.

“Hello, Dad,” Mark said, and Chevalier glanced at Mark and then back to Maleth.

Maleth sat in a chair and lowered his voice to softer than a whisper, “The Encala won’t trade the Ancient for their Elder.”

“Get him,” Chevalier whispered.

“We’re trying. The doctor doesn’t remember attacking Emily.”

Chevalier nodded, “I figured.”

“We tried to bail Kyle out. For some reason, he’s going by the name Keith Russo… but anyway… the judge won’t set a bail until he knows how bad Emily is,” Maleth explained.

“Kyle is trying not to implicate any of the heku in the abuse,” Chevalier said, touching her cheek lightly.

“Abuse?” Maleth asked, curiously.

“Emily has been through a lot of abuse, mostly at the hands of her ex-husband, Keith. Then you add damages done by the Ancient, and the car

wreck… it all adds up to domestic violence," Chevalier whispered, his insides tightening.

"The baby… is it…"

"They don't know." Chevalier looked at Emily's peacefully relaxed face, "Let's turn her."

"What? Turn Emily?" Mark gasped.

"We can't without her permission," Maleth reminded him.

"It could save her from all of this. We could turn her right now," Chevalier said, looking up at the heku around him.

"We can't do it with three," Mark said.

"Why not? We have the two out of three Elder approvals that we need… we can do it."

"No, we can't. Three of us can't drain her fast enough to make it work," Maleth said, touching Chevalier's arm lightly. "She wouldn't want to be turned. She has never expressed a desire for it."

"Get me that Ancient, alive," Chevalier hissed.

"There's one thing… something I wanted to just bring up," Maleth said, and waited until Chevalier looked at him.

“What?”

“The dog, Emily’s new dog… he attacked the doctor.”

“So? He doesn’t like heku,” Mark said, softly.

“I don’t think that’s the case. As soon as the doctor became aware of his actions, the dog let him be,” Maleth said.

“I still don’t see why we’re talking about the dog right now,” Chevalier said.

Mark nodded, “He started to growl the other day, just before her headache started.”

“Chev?” Emily whispered, and the three heku turned to look at her.

“I’m here, Em,” he said, rubbing her hand.

“I hurt.”

“I know. You’re in the hospital,” he said to her. She still hadn’t opened her eyes.

“Make them stop. I won’t do it,” she whispered.

“Tell me, Em, who?” Chevalier asked, softly.

“Tell them I won’t do it,” she said again.

“Who?” he asked her, frustrated.

“The pain doesn’t matter. I won’t do it,” she said, frowning slightly.

“Do what?”

“Who?” he growled when she didn’t answer.

“Visiting hours were over at 11pm,” a nurse said when she walked in the room.

“Can’t we stay? Please?” Mark asked her.

“Are you her husband?” the nurse asked, looking at him over her reading glasses.

“No, her husband is in jail… we’re brothers and her dad,” Mark explained.

“Then out,” she said, irritated. “You can wait in the lobby if you want, visiting hours start at 7am.”

Maleth and Mark stood up, but Chevalier didn’t move. They each took an arm and had to use their strength to get him to stand up and let go of her.

“She’ll rip out her I.V.,” Chevalier said, as he was pulled to the door.

“We’ll watch it,” the nurse told him, sounding insulted.

The few mortals in the lobby thought the men in the corner were sitting in silence, still as statues, but they were, in fact, carrying on a conversation. They were desperately trying to figure out how they were going to get at the Ancient. They were interrupted at 7:30am when a pretty nurse came and touched Maleth on the shoulder.

“Sir?” she asked, smiling sweetly at him.

Maleth turned to her, “Yes?”

“Are you Emily Russo’s father?”

“Yes,” he replied.

“She’s… well…” the nurse hesitated and then sighed, “She’s asking for her husband, and we thought maybe you could talk to her. She doesn’t seem to believe that her husband is in jail for... domestic violence.”

Maleth nodded, “She’s a lot closer to her brother, maybe he should go.”

The nurse smiled, “Ok, come with me.”

Chevalier thanked Maleth and followed the nurse into the elevator.

“Where is she?” Chevalier asked.

“She was moved to the ICU last night,” the nurse said sweetly.

Chevalier nodded and followed the nurse out of the elevator and into a large round room. The center desk was also round and full of monitors and folders. Glass rooms lined the outside circle, most had curtains pulled across the glass.

The nurse opened Emily's door and smiled at Chevalier.

"Please, let me break it to her alone," he said to the nurse, and she nodded and shut the door after him.

"Chev," Emily said, and smiled.

Chevalier sat down in a chair by her and took her hand. He frowned when he saw that her hands were restrained to the sides of the bed with soft leather restraints.

"How are you?" he asked, softly.

"Let my hands go, please," she said, pulling at the restraints.

He smiled and kissed her hand, "I'm imagining they are there to keep your I.V. in."

"Please," she begged.

"How are you?" he asked again.

"I've had worse," she said, and looked up at the I.V.

“I need to explain some things. It’s important that you understand me.”

She looked over at him, “What’s wrong?”

He smiled, “Where should I start. Your injuries, the ones from last night and the ones from previous years… the doctors are blaming it on domestic violence.”

Emily frowned.

“We know… some of it was from Keith. So Kyle took the fall.”

“What do you mean?”

“Kyle has been arrested on domestic assault charges, from what we can tell… a lot of them.”

“Why did he do that?”

“I think to save me from going to jail. He knew I would want to be here. So he went to jail as Keith, which means he probably kept Keith’s I.D.” Chevalier watched her carefully.

“He’s still in jail?”

“We’ll get him out, ok? As soon as a judge posts bail.”

“If Kyle is Keith, then who are you?”

“Your brother… so is Mark, and Maleth is your Dad,” he said, shrugging. “It all happened so fast and spiraled into one huge, confusing mess.”

“I thought I was the one with the head injury,” Emily said. She laughed once and then winced.

“Don’t laugh, Em,” he said, touching her arm.

“I don’t remember why I’m here,” she said finally.

“It was another ancient attack.”

“Why don’t I remember?” she asked, confused.

“It was right after one of your headaches,” Chevalier said. He didn’t mention that he’d been trying to control her even though his intentions were good.

“Please let my hands go, they hurt,” she said, looking into his eyes.

“No”

“They hurt.”

“If I thought that for one moment, I’d rip them off of you.”

“When can I go home?”

“They haven’t said. We’ll ask the doctor, ok?”

She nodded.

“We’ll find out about the baby, too,” he said, watching her.

She frowned, “What about the baby?”

“To see if it’s ok.”

“Why wouldn’t it be ok? I hit my head.”

Chevalier considered lying, but then remembered his promise, “It was more than that. You were thrown across the room and into a door.”

She frowned, “By who?”

“Does it matter?”

“Yes… it does.”

“The doctor.”

Emily turned her head away from him, “I want to be alone.”

Chevalier nodded and kissed her on the forehead before leaving.

He returned to the lobby. Maleth and Mark had heard their conversation, so he didn’t need to fill them in on the details. They waited for a few hours before the doctor appeared.

“Hello,” he said, shaking their hands.

“You’re Emily’s Dad?” the doctor asked Maleth, and he nodded.

“May I talk to you alone for a moment?”

“Actually, talk to her brother. He’s a lot closer to her than I am,” Maleth said, and Chevalier stood up.

“Sorry, dad trumps brother,” the doctor told them, and led Maleth to his office.

Chevalier leaned toward the office so he could hear better.

“Your daughter’s suffered very serious physical injuries, but we also need to address the emotional abuse. We’ve noticed she has nightmares, and while that’s common with domestic violence, hers seem confused and well… quite frankly… don’t make much sense,” the doctor said.

Maleth caught Chevalier’s words, and repeated them to the doctor, “What do you mean that they don’t make sense?”

“It’s common with a head injury. I wouldn’t worry about it,” the doctor smiled.

“So when can we take her home?” Maleth asked.

“That’s the other thing. Her husband is locked up in jail, but if he can post bail, he’ll be back on the streets. With the controlling abusive types, there’s a good chance he’ll try to get back with her.”

“She won’t, her brothers and I won’t allow it.”

“That’s good to hear. A strong family base will help,” the doctor said.

“What about the baby?”

“As far as we can tell, the baby is fine.”

“That’s great!” Maleth said. “So… about taking her home?”

“I want to keep her for a few more days. Then she can go home as long as it’s not to her husband,” the doctor said. “You need to understand that abused wives often return to their husbands.”

Maleth nodded, “Trust me, that won’t happen.”

“Doctor?” a nurse said, knocking on the open door.

“Yes?”

“Umm… patient in room 6? She got out of her restraints and pulled her I.V. out again.”

“Put it back in,” he said, not looking at Maleth.

“She’s fighting us, Sir.”

“Very well, I’ll come,” the doctor told her, and stood up. “Let her rest, come and get her on Friday.”

Maleth nodded and returned to the lobby.

Chevalier carried Emily up the stairs, cradled in his arms. She still had bandages around her head and her arm was in a cast.

“I can walk, you know,” she said, laying her head against his shoulder.

“I’m sure you can.”

“Mommy!” Allen yelled, and ran to Chevalier when they walked in her room. Chevalier laid her on the bed and Allen jumped up and hugged her.

“Hi, Baby,” she said, leaning back against the pillow.

“I missed you,” Allen told her, and kissed Emily on the cheek.

“I missed you, too.”

Chevalier propped her bad arm up on a pillow and sat down on the bed, “Need anything?”

She shook her head.

“I have pills for the headache.” He put a bottle on the bedside table.

“My wrists hurt worse than my headache,” she said.

Chevalier picked up her good hand and rubbed her wrist, “It wouldn’t hurt if you would have stopped slipping the restraints and taking your I.V. out. They had to keep tightening them.”

“They wouldn’t take it out,” she said in her defense.

“Get down!” Chevalier said, scooting Ford off of the bed when he jumped up.

“Be nice, Chev,” Emily said, frowning.

“He’s fine,” Chevalier told her, as he watched the puppy tear apart a pair of shoes.

“I’m tired.” Emily shut her eyes.

Sam came and took Allen as Chevalier sat on the bed and watched her sleep. The heku in the corner stood silently and watched everything in the room.

“Let’s go,” he whispered, when there was an all-call to the council chambers. He kissed Emily softly and then both blurred to the council chambers.

Chevalier took his spot with the Council while the guard stood along the walls. Standing in the middle of the trial area were four heku in dark red robes, obvious Encala.

Leonid stood, “Why have you come to our City?”

One of the robed Encala stepped forward. His hood was pulled low to cover his identity, “We have come for our Elder. We demand his immediate return.”

“You demand?” Damon asked, amused.

“Yes… we will return the Winchester to you if you return the Elder to us,” he said.

Chevalier spoke, “Maybe we don’t want her back. She’s been a pain.”

The robed figure turned to Chevalier, “We know you want her back. Now return the Elder to us, and we will return the Winchester to you tonight.”

“That’s very nice of you but... no,” Damon said.

“We want the Ancient in return for your Elder,” Leonid said.

“We don’t have an ancient,” the Encala replied.

“We heard differently,” Leonid said.

“The only thing we will trade for the Elder is the girl.”

“We already have her, try again,” Damon said, irritated.

“You do not have the girl, we have her.”

Chevalier rolled his eyes, “Don’t be stupid, she’s upstairs.”

“Smell deeply, heku, do you smell the scent of a pregnant Winchester?” They could see a glimmer of teeth as he grinned.

“What makes you think she’s pregnant?” Maleth asked.

“We have our own informants.”

“We aren’t trading you the Elder for Emily,” Chevalier said, sighing.

The back door to the council chambers opened and Emily stumbled in. She fell forward into Damon’s arms. Chevalier was at her side in a blur and knelt down.

“Emily, what’s wrong?” he asked.

“I’m hearing voices in the bedroom,” she said, her were eyes afraid.

“Frank, Mark, take her upstairs,” Chevalier said. It wasn’t until he calmed down, that he noticed the bandages were off of her head, and her cast was missing.

Chevalier froze when he heard a series of hisses, and the sound of fighting. He looked up just as Damon disappeared over the desk.

“Get her out of here,” Maleth yelled, jumping into the fight.

Chevalier picked Emily up and blurred to their room. He sat her down and turned as Mark and Frank entered.

“Where did you hear voices?” he asked her.

“In the bathroom,” she said, looking at the door.

Mark and Frank walked into the bathroom and looked around carefully, “There’s no one in here.”

“I swear I heard them,” she said.

“I know,” he said, kissing her forehead, “But you also have a head injury. I shouldn’t have left you alone. I’m sorry.”

“I didn’t mean to cause a fight,” she apologized, softly.

He smiled, “They were asking for one anyway. I’m sure Damon is quite happy that you started it, as he was about to.”

“Go back, it’s ok,” she said, laying down.

“Where’s your cast?”

“It… slipped off,” she said, blushing.

Mark came out of the bathroom carrying her cast. It was torn in half, “Who did you have to bribe to get this torn off?”

She shrugged and then gasped when the pain in her shoulder hit.

“I’m ok, just go back,” Emily told Chevalier.

“I’ll leave Mark and Frank, ok?”

Emily nodded, and Chevalier blurred to the council chambers and sat in his chair. The four Encala were now restrained. Damon was furious, which meant the Elders called off the killing of the Encala.

“Well… where were we?” Chevalier asked.

“We were just seeing what else they had to offer other than Emily, who is obviously still here,” Maleth said, turning to the Encala.

“How do you not feed from her?” one of them asked, running his tongue along his lips. The taste of her blood was still in the air.

“Control,” Leonid said, bluntly.

“What offer is on the table?” Chevalier asked, trying to catch up.

“So far, they have nothing,” Damon said.

“Do we know who they are?”

“Apparently no one… the Encala were afraid to send anyone of importance, not sure why,” Maleth said with a grin.

“If they won’t tell us what we want… let’s just have Emily turn them to ash. She can do it slowly, I’ve felt it, the burn is severe,” Chevalier suggested.

Damon shrugged, “That would be entertaining to watch and she does love to do it… especially the slow part.”

“No, please!” one of them yelled, and fell to his knees.

“Where is the Ancient being held?” Maleth asked, rising to his feet.

“We don’t know. They told us nothing!”

Damon spoke up, “He is in the Council’s main city. He has to be.”

“Take them to prison,” Leonid said, and sighed.

“How is she?” Maleth asked, worried.

“She’s ok. She heard voices,” Chevalier said, looking at the council members.

“Voices?” Damon asked.

“She has a head injury, I’m sure it’s related. Mark and Frank checked it out and didn’t see or hear anything,” he said.

“How dare they lie to us about her and then …” Leonid said, too angry to continue.

“You can’t expect more from the Encala.”

Chevalier turned into a blur, and the council members got to their feet as they heard Emily scream from her room. He appeared in her room and saw Frank and Mark holding her down to the bed.

“No, you can’t make me!” she screamed, and arched her back.

“I’m trying again… keep her safe,” he said to the council members.

He watched from the head of the bed until she fell silent and her body went limp.

“Emily… look at me,” he said, sternly. He watched as her eyes fluttered open, and he was easily able to lock her gaze. He concentrated as her breathing slowed to match his, and she relaxed fully in his hands.

“Emily?” he asked, to see if she would answer.

“Stop them,” she said softly, the color in her green eyes was dull.

“Stop who?” his voice was a soft and calming cadence.

“Stop them.”

“Emily, stop who?”

“I don’t know who they are,” she whispered.

“What do they want you to do?”

“I won’t do it.”

“Do what?”

“It hurts to say no,” she said, frowning slightly.

“What do they want you to do?”

“I will kill her,” she whispered.

“Kill who Emily? Tell me.” Chevalier broke the gaze and looked up when he heard a crash. Frank was on the floor, struggling to fight off the entire Council. Damon quickly broke Frank’s neck, and as his body went limp, the Chief Enforcer stood up. Frank began to slowly heal, but his eyes were glazed over and confused.

“The dog knew,” Mark said, picking up the puppy. The dog growled and shook his head viciously as he tore at one of Chevalier’s shoes.

“What do you mean he knew?” Chevalier asked.

“He started to growl. I thought at first he was growling at us, but he was looking at the fireplace… then he howled… then she started to scream,” Mark explained.

Maleth nodded, “I’ve seen it, the dog knows.”

“We’ve discussed these episodes. They are dreams caused by the pain from the concussion… how can a dog see that?” one of the council members asked.

“Maybe it’s a smell, something even we cannot pick up and the dog smells it just before it happens,” another member answered.

“Or it’s an outside presence and he hears it,” Damon said, turning to the dog.

Chevalier’s eyes narrowed, “What do you mean?”

“The voices… the ‘stop them’, what if it’s someone… channeling, if you will,” Damon turned to Emily.

“For what purpose?” Leonid asked, frowning.

“We don’t know. She keeps refusing,” Damon said.

“She said it hurt to say no,” Chevalier said, thinking. “So the voices… whatever… ask her to do something, and when she says no, the pain starts.”

Damon nods, “Then it gets worse when she keeps saying no, until the voice breaks off or she passes out.”

“That would mean the ‘stop them’ is for us. She is begging us to stop it,” Chevalier said, looking down at Emily as she slept.

“Have you noticed that when you are controlling her… someone tries to kill her,” Damon said, thinking out loud. “Then the concentration breaks and the questioning stops.”

Chevalier nodded, “It’s the Ancient… he’s trying to get Emily to do something, and then punishes her for refusing. Then when I’m starting to get information, he turns to one of us and tries to have her killed to stop her from talking.”

“It’s an Encala attack,” Damon said, looking at Chevalier.

“I need to get her under control where I can keep it.”

“In a cell, in the dungeon… we lock you in and only you have the key,” Damon suggested. “Then no matter how bad we want to kill her, we can’t get in.”

“Unless it’s me that tries to kill her, and then no one can protect her,” Chevalier sighed.

“This is all a little farfetched, don’t you think?” one of the Council suggested. “The ancients wanted mortals dead… if he wants her dead, why doesn’t he just kill her?”

Ford began to growl and everyone turned to look at Emily.

“I won’t do it!” Emily screamed, sitting up suddenly. She clutched her chest and groaned.

“Emily, what’s wrong?” Chevalier asked, sitting by her.

“I won’t do it… make them stop,” she begged, and screamed in pain.

“What do they want you to do?” he asked, trying to lock her gaze.

“It doesn’t matter,” she groaned, “I won’t do it.”

“Do what? Tell me.” he growled.

Mark picked up Ford as he began to howl, and put him in the bathroom.

Emily stood up and a shadow across her face. She breathed heavily and looked around the room with fierceness uncharacteristic for her.

“Emily?” Chevalier asked, watching her as he took a step back.

Her body began to shake and she hissed, “I won’t do it.”

Emily fell to her knees, her hands against her head, “No.”

Chevalier knelt in front of her and forced her to face him, “Look at me.”

Emily squeezed her eyes shut with the pain.

“Now, Emily, look at me.” Her eyes flew open and he immediately locked her gaze. The heku around them watched one another closely.

As Emily began to breathe in sync with Chevalier, he spoke in the soft calming cadence, “Emily, what do they want you to do?”

“I won’t,” she whispered.

“I know, but what do they want you to do?”

“I will kill her,” she said again, softly.

“Kill who?”

Chevalier stopped talking and held her gaze as he heard the commotion going on behind him. He knew if he spoke, his voice might break in

anger, so he looked deeper into her eyes, holding the control. When things quieted down, he continued.

“Kill who, Emily?”

“I won’t do it,” Emily whispered.

Leonid jumped for the bathroom door when Ford began to dig frantically and bark.

“Do what?” he concentrated harder.

“I will kill her if you don’t stop.”

The entire room froze and looked at Emily. Her voice had changed, it was cracked and malicious.

Chevalier didn’t break his concentration, “You can’t kill her. We won’t let you.”

Another fight broke out in the room, but Chevalier didn’t react, didn’t break her gaze.

“Emily, what do they want you to do?”

“Saying no hurts,” she said, softly.

“I know.”

“I won’t do it.”

“Do what?”

Chevalier growled with frustration when she collapsed onto the floor. He picked her up and carried her to the bed. The heku watched for hours as she slept.

When morning came, Sam came out from the nursery with Allen. Allen smiled at Chevalier and squirmed to be let down. Sam put him on the floor, and he ran into his Dad’s arms.

“Good morning!” Allen said, and grinned, then wrapped his arms around Chevalier.

Chevalier kissed his forehead, “Good morning.”

“Look, firemen,” Allen said, showing Chevalier the action figures in his hand.

“I see, very nice,” Chevalier told him, trying to give his son some much needed attention.

“They talk too.”

“They do? What do they say?” Chevalier grinned.

Allen held up the figurine to Chevalier and lowered his voice, “Ritus poena, invito antiquus...”

“Stop!” Chevalier yelled, and then softened his voice. “I’m sorry, Allen.”

All of the heku turned and looked at the raven haired boy, their eyes a mixture of confusion and fear.

Chevalier’s face became serious, “When do they say that?”

“All the time. They talk a lot,” Allen said, mimicking the firemen putting out a fire.

“What… what else do they say?” he asked, and the other Elders stepped closer to hear him.

Allen shrugged, “They don’t say any real words.”

“I know, tell me what else they say, please,” Chevalier said, smiling.

“They sing, there’s a song, but it’s boring.”

“Tell me.”

“Can I show you their truck?” Allen asked, trying to climb off the bed.

Chevalier pulled him back onto the covers, “Tell me the song.”

“It’s boring.”

“I want to hear it anyway.”

“Ok… it goes…” Allen’s voice changed to a soft rhythmic cadence, “Caedo consilium, Caedo consilium, over and over.”

Maleth gasped and looked at Leonid, who was watching Allen with wide eyes.

“Are they talking right now?” Leonid asked the toddler.

“No,” Allen said, and pulled the firemen’s jacket off of one figure.

“When do they sing?” Chevalier asked, trying to sound casual.

“They are always singing… can I get breakfast?” he asked, and climbed down.

Chevalier nodded to Sam, and he took Allen’s hand and led him out of the room.

“How can he know about the ritual of pain?” Maleth frowned.

“Not just know about it, but know how the words to perform it,” Leonid added.

“He can’t,” Chevalier said. “He has to be hearing what Emily is hearing.”

“Then why isn’t he in pain?” Leonid asked.

“The voices aren’t for him,” Damon said, understanding.

“That’s it then…” Chevalier said. “Someone is telling her to kill the Council, and when she refuses, they inflict the ritual of pain.”

“A mortal can’t live through the ritual of pain, that’s proven. It’s killed even heku before,” Maleth said, angrily.

“This is Emily. We already know she’s more than a mortal,” Leonid said.

“If she could use that connection… the connection the voices use to get to her. Turn it on them,” Damon said, looking at the wall.

“You mean use their voices to turn them to ash?” Chevalier asked him, frowning.

“The ritual of pain takes more than just words. It takes power, and someone is sending that across distances. If she can somehow use that same method…”

Chevalier nodded, “Then she could turn the sender to ash.”

Chapter 9 - Encala Ancient

“She’s tried twelve times. She needs a break,” Chevalier growled.

“I’m ok, I can try again,” Emily said from the bed.

“He’s right, you need to rest,” Maleth said, standing up from the chair by the fireplace.

“We all could use a night off,” Mark added, and looked around at the fifteen gathered heku.

“I’m not taking medicine to make me sleep,” she said, frowning.

“It’s the only way to stop the attacks. You need a rest,” the doctor said, holding the shot in his hand.

“Touch me with that thing and I’ll ash you again,” she glared.

The doctor took a step back. He remembered the pain of her fury.

“Emily, for me… please,” Chevalier asked, softly.

“No”

Emily screamed as she felt the pinch in her arm and turned, shocked to see Kyle standing beside her with the needle. The doctor looked down at his empty hand, confused.

“You can ash me later,” Kyle said, grinning as she fell to the bed.

“You’re either very brave or one stupid heku,” Chevalier said, shaking his head at Kyle, “But welcome back.”

Kyle grinned, “Mark filled me in out in the hallway.”

As soon as the room cleared out and Kyle was hidden in the corner, Chevalier turned off the lights and curled up next to Emily. He hated the way she smelled after medicine. To him it was almost like sleeping by a stranger. He knew she needed this though.

It was like looking down a dark hallway. As he emerged, he stepped out into the foyer of a grand palace. There were golden statues and white marble pillars with bouquets of red roses lining the red carpet runners.

Chevalier sat up suddenly and looked around.

“What’s wrong?” Kyle whispered from the corner.

“I don’t know… it was a palace, red carpets and flowers… I don’t know where it came from. Just an image,” he said, confused.

“Is it Emily’s dream?” Kyle suggested.

“I haven’t been able to do that for two months, not since she left for Colorado.”

“Try again, see what you get.”

Chevalier touched her arm and suddenly grew still.

"Good evening," the heku said, bowing deeply.

"Most honorable Ancient," another heku said, bowing.

A large wooden door opened to a lavish court room. The Encala banner hung from behind the platform.

"Kyle… she's seeing the Encala's council room. I've been there before, and she's seeing it exactly. I don't think she's been there," Chevalier said.

Kyle stepped out of the shadow, "Can she pull information from you?"

"Not that I've seen," Chevalier thought. "When I'm there… I'm the Ancient, I see through his eyes."

"Could the connection be permanent then? Something he uses at will, but is always there?"

Chevalier reached down and touched her arm again.

"They did not return, as expected," one of the Encala Elders said.

"Did they see her?"another member of the Council asked the Ancient.

"Yes, I caught images of her from them."

Chevalier felt the fury when the Ancient spoke again, "She is mine and I want her… now!"

"Patience, please, ancient one. We will get her," the Elder said, smiling.

"She will soon do as I ask and kill the Equites Council. Once that is done, you will bring her to me. It's time she takes her place at my side."

"Yes, ancient one," the Elder said, bowing.

"So like her mother. So strong," the ancient one said, and Chevalier felt an immense sense of loss.

"My God, Kyle," Chevalier said, looking at Emily.

"What did you see?"

"Her father is an Encala Elder… an ancient," he said, softly.

"The Encala have an ancient on their council?" Kyle was shocked. One of the rules that all three factions held, was that the ancients were to remain buried for the safety of the mortals.

"And have for quite some time," Chevalier hissed.

"An ancient and a mortal though? That's… well that's impossible, isn't it?" Kyle asked, watching him.

"Not impossible, just unheard of."

“What are the implications?”

“I don’t know. The one thing I’m sure of now… she’s seeing inside of the Encala palace.” A dark grin crossed his face, “If she can see them… “

“She can ash them,” Kyle said in a harsh whisper.

“We need to figure out how to help her see this while she’s awake. The blood bond has to be the answer. The strength of the Ancient in her veins.” Chevalier looked at her with a deeper respect.

“Did Ulrich know?”

“I don’t think so… if he had, he wouldn’t have let her live a mortal life, I’m sure of it. He would have had the greatest trophy,” Chevalier looked at Kyle.

“We need to keep this to ourselves as long as we can,” Kyle said.

Chevalier nodded, “Emily will know, we have to tell her.”

“Agreed”

“That’s why she doesn’t remember.”

Kyle frowned slightly, “What do you mean?”

“When the heku visited Emily’s mother, he was able to erase her memory. She had no idea of the visits. So when this Ancient sends the

ritual of pain and the commands to Emily, he then erases his tracks. That's why she doesn't know about them," Chevalier said, seething.

Chevalier curled up next to her and shut his eyes. His mind filled with swirls of gray and the soft flow of emotions. She was no longer walking the hallways of the Encala palace. She was now dreaming.

"Just concentrate," Chevalier said, watching Emily as she sat cross-legged on the bed.

Emily shut her eyes and breathed deeply. She let her shoulders relax, and then her arms. The room was entirely quiet, even though she was very much aware that fifteen heku were currently watching her.

Emily opened one eye.

"Em," Chevalier sighed.

"I'm sorry, this is embarrassing… can't I just try this alone?" she asked.

"No, you can't, try again."

"I'm not getting anything. When I shut my eyes, all I see is… well… the insides of my eyelids," she said with a smirk.

"You aren't concentrating." Damon said, frustrated.

“You aren’t helping,” she snapped at Damon.

Damon growled, “She can’t do it.”

Emily’s eyes narrowed, “You are getting on my last nerve.”

“Heku blood or not, you’re a mortal, and too weak to undertake this task,” he said to her, coldly.

Emily launched off of the bed, catching Damon off guard. She slammed into him, knocking him to the ground. He brought his hands up defensively as Emily crashed her fist into his nose, shattering it. Damon hissed just as Emily felt strong hands against her waist lift her off of him.

“Calm down,” Chevalier said, laughing. He held her as she fought to get free.

“Let me show him just how weak I am,” she roared.

“He’s sorry he called you weak,” Maleth said, watching her, amused.

“No, I’m not,” Damon told them, and stood up to readjust his nose.

“Did you want to feel the burn or do you just want ashed quickly?” Emily threatened, pulling at Chevalier’s fingers to get loose.

“Emily calm down… Damon… get lost,” Chevalier said, still grinning. The image of Emily flying off of the bed onto Damon made him want to laugh.

Emily screamed at him as he left, “Masochistic, psychopathic, mal-adjusted heku... you belong with the unstable Encala...” Chevalier cut off her words by wrapping a hand around her mouth.

Damon spun and started back into the room, but was topped by Leonid’s hand on his shoulder. The Elder looked back at Chevalier once as he led Damon away from Emily.

“Are you done?” Chevalier asked, still amused. He was glad Emily couldn’t see his face. She would be extremely upset that he found this funny.

“Anyone else think I’m weak?” Emily scowled as she looked around the room. None of the heku would look at her. Some were turned around, but she could see their shoulders move as they laughed.

Chevalier finally set her down on her feet, “Get out. Everyone just get out.”

Chevalier nodded to them and her room emptied out. She sat down on the bed, still angry. Emily laid back on the bed and looked up at the

ceiling. She watched the intricate pattern of the tiles as she slowly calmed down.

The heku bowed to her as she walked along the corridor. She could feel the swish of her robes as she walked.

She studied the golden statues and the paintings of heku along the walls. The carpets and drapes were all blood-red.

"We're about ready to begin," she heard someone say from behind her.

"Emily? What are you doing?" the voice came from far away.

She walked down the hallway after the heku. She could feel the excitement in the air. She opened the door and walked into a round room.

"We're a little early. I'll go see what's taking the others so long," the heku said, and left. Emily was alone in the room. She looked at the walls and ran her fingers along the runes etched into them. She followed along the runes, tracing each one. She could feel the stone under her finger and the grooves that formed the ancient text.

"Emily, what are you doing?" she heard again from a distance.

Emily turned when other heku walked in. They were wearing dark blue robes, and each bowed to her. She moved to the outside edge of the

circle alongside the others. She saw the mortal brought into the room, and he looked around at them, afraid.

"Mortal, do you know where you are?" she saw a heku say to the man.

He nodded, "Yes."

"Do you know what is about to happen?" she could feel the excitement building.

"Yes"

"Do you do so willingly and without coercion?"

"Yes"

"Proceed"

Emily felt herself walk forward. She saw the robes against her hand as she reached out, she was in a long black robe.

She could feel the hiss escape her lips as she brought her teeth to his neck and punctured his flesh with her teeth. The blood flowed down her throat, and she could taste the thick, salty liquid. She was aware of other heku doing the same and had an urge to rip them apart, to protect her kill. She controlled the urge and drank deeply as the man screamed.

"Emily, stop!" she heard the voice say to her.

Her instincts told her to stop, and she felt herself pull away from him. Emily tore at her wrist, ripping open her own vein, and she watched as her blood poured out, and the mortal brought his lips to it and drank. It took some force to pull away from the mortal, and as she did, he fell to the dirt floor weakly.

Emily picked up a stick. She could feel the hard wood under her hand as she began to draw runes into the dirt. The mortal began to go into seizures as she proceeded to etch around him, delicately carved runes older than time itself.

"Emily stop, now!" she heard a voice behind her, but she couldn't stop.

She brought the stick up high above the convulsing mortal and plunged it deep into his chest. She watched as the blood poured out of him and ran into the runes. Emily looked up as the ceiling began to glow. She heard the gasps from the heku as the mortal fell silent.

"He can't be dead," she whispered.

Chevalier caught her as she fell and cradled her in his arms. He was looking around the room at the sacred heku runes painted on the walls. The gathered heku were too stunned to speak.

"Chevalier," Kyle said, looking at Emily.

He looked down at her and a trickle of blood fell from her nose. Chevalier looked around the room again, and the shaken faces of the heku turned to worry as they looked at him.

“She… she just performed the ceremony,” Frank said, looking at the runes fearfully.

“I know,” Chevalier hissed, “I watched it.”

“We’ll have to kill her. A mortal can’t know,” Damon said, growling.

Chevalier turned and glared at him, “You’ll have to get through me.”

“She doesn’t know how to perform the ceremony,” Kyle said. He seemed to be the only heku in the room not completely shocked.

Damon turned to him, “We saw her. We all did.”

“She still doesn’t know… I’m guessing there are some very confused Encala right now though,” Kyle laughed, and the other heku looked at him, astonished he could find any of this amusing.

“This is very serious, Kyle. A mortal cannot know about the ceremony. She can’t see the runes and live,” Damon said.

Kyle shook his head, “Don’t you see? She did it.”

“I know she did. We saw it,” Maleth said to Kyle.

Chevalier nodded, “She was seeing the ceremony through the Ancient. Somewhere… in some Encala coven… the ceremony has just failed. The mortal died.”

Leonid smiled, “She’s done it. She’s found a connection back to the Ancient.”

“Get these runes off of the walls and the floors,” Chevalier said, and carried Emily out of the room and into Kyle’s room. He laid her down on the bed and wiped the blood from her nose.

“She did it,” Kyle said, proudly.

Chevalier nodded, “I just wish it hadn’t been during a ceremony.”

“It was a little creepy to see her doing the actions to feed. I will admit that,” Kyle said, sitting on a chair beside them.

“I’m amazed at the details. She painted those runes perfectly. Most heku can’t do that,” Chevalier said, impressed.

“Do you think she’ll remember it?”

“I don’t know. I guess it depends on if the Ancient knows she was there or not.”

“I taste blood,” Emily said softly, her eyes still shut.

“We’ll fix that,” Chevalier promised, and reached out when a heku brought a glass of orange juice to him.

Emily felt the glass against her lips, so she opened her eyes and took the glass, drinking. She gave Kyle the glass and crawled off of Chevalier’s lap.

“I bit someone,” she said, wrinkling her nose.

Chevalier nodded, “Yes, we saw.”

“I couldn’t stop.”

“It wasn’t you. You were the Ancient, you did it… you were able to see through his eyes.” Chevalier kissed her forehead.

“Gah, I still taste blood, it’s salty and thick… ugh, nasty,” she said, shuddering.

Kyle laughed, “Some of us like that.”

“That taste is making me sick,” she said, putting her hand on her stomach, and Chevalier was pretty sure she was turning a pale-ish green.

“What would you like to eat?” Chevalier grinned.

“Bleach?”

Kyle laughed, “Is it really that bad?”

Emily covered her mouth and ran into Kyle's bathroom. He was glad he had it fitted with human necessities, just in case.

"I'll take that as a yes," Chevalier said, raising an eyebrow.

Maleth and Leonid came in and looked around, "Where is she?"

"Vomiting, I do believe," Kyle said, smiling.

"Is she ok?" Maleth asked.

"Yes, she can't get the taste of blood out of her mouth. It made her sick," Chevalier chuckled.

"Hmm," Leonid sighed and sat down in a chair.

"Curious," Maleth said, and leaned back against the wall.

"Is her room ready?" Kyle asked.

"No, the runes aren't washing off… we are getting some paint," Maleth explained.

"They won't wash off? It was just child's paint she used."

"Yes, but ancient runes don't want to disappear," Leonid explained.

Kyle nodded.

“I’ll take that,” Chevalier said to the heku that carried a tray into the room.

Emily emerged a few minutes later, still pale.

“Here’s your lunch,” Chevalier said, pulling the dome off.

Emily sat down and started eating the spaghetti and garlic bread. She looked up when she felt the others watching her.

“What?”

“That smells awful,” Kyle grimaced.

“I asked for extra garlic to get rid of that gross blood taste,” she said, taking another bite from the garlic bread.

Maleth sat at the table by her, “Child? I’m sorry… Emily… what do you remember?”

“About what? The ceremony?” she asked, taking another bite of spaghetti.

“Yes”

“All of it I guess,” she shrugged and took a drink.

“Can you write the runes for me?” he asked, and handed her a notepad and a pen.

She shook her head, “I doubt it. I don’t remember exactly what they looked like.”

Maleth smiled, “Very well.”

“Blood taste is gone,” she said, grinning, and took another bite of garlic bread.

“I can’t imagine preferring garlic over blood,” Kyle chuckled.

Emily held up a forkful of spaghetti, “I dare you.”

Chevalier turned and looked at Kyle.

“What? Me? Eat that?” he asked, narrowing his eyes.

“Take one bite… if you can keep it down… hmmm… I’ll announce to the Cavalry your awesomeness,” Emily laughed.

“And if I can’t keep it down?”

“I could use a pedicure,” she said, wiggling her toes.

Kyle took one step closer to her and smelled the spaghetti.

“If I were you, I would just walk away now…” Chevalier laughed.

Maleth and Leonid watched him, curiously.

Kyle quickly took the entire bite of spaghetti and stood up. As he chewed, his stomach turned and he fought the urge to spit it out. He shut his eyes. The soft mushy texture in his mouth was excruciatingly disgusting.

Chevalier watched him, amused.

“Good right?” Emily asked, grinning.

Kyle just thought about control as he swallowed the mass of gooey spaghetti. It became too much, and he ran for the bathroom.

“Pedicure!” Emily yelled and laughed.

“Shall we get back to business?” Damon asked from the bedroom door.

“Party pooper,” Emily said to him.

Damon’s eyes narrowed.

Kyle came back out, embarrassed, “You win, that’s… way past disgusting.”

“Now that the fun is over… shall we try to get Emily back into the Encala palace?” Damon asked, stepping into the room.

Emily walked over until she was toe-to-toe with Damon. Chevalier stood up, ready to pull her off of him again. She motioned for Damon to bend

down to her level. He frowned and bent down so he was looking into her eyes.

“Yes?”

Emily looked into his eyes, and opened hers wide, “Go jump off a cliff.”

Damon stood up and frowned, “What was that?”

Chevalier shut his eyes and shook his head.

“I’m going to get that down,” Emily said, leaving the room and heading into her own room to change.

Damon turned to Chevalier, “What was that?”

“She’s trying to use the heku mind control on you,” Chevalier said, and grinned.

“On me? How absurd,” Damon sounded offended.

“You really could stop fighting with her, you know,” Kyle said to him, sternly.

“She needs to learn some respect,” Damon hissed, irritated.

“You’ll lose.”

“A fight against her? I doubt it.”

“Would you two stop it? You’re worse than Emily, Kyle,” Maleth said, annoyed.

“When will she try again?” Damon asked.

Chevalier watched behind Damon as Emily stepped out of her bedroom, pulling on her riding gloves. She blew Chevalier a kiss and headed down the stairs.

“I’m guessing… later,” Chevalier said.

“Why not now?” Damon said.

“She has other plans,” Chevalier said.

“I worry about this Council. You all let that mortal walk around like she owns the place,” he growled.

Maleth raised an eyebrow, “Most of us don’t have a problem with her. If you could see clearly, you would see that she is necessary.”

“Necessary, I understand. She needs to be taught control and respect through punishment,” he said, bluntly.

Chevalier stood up angrily, and Kyle held him back as he started to jump at Damon, “You will not speak about my wife like that!”

Damon nodded, he wasn’t in the position to take on an Elder.

“You will find… Chief Enforcer… that almost every heku that has met her will fight you over comments like that,” Leonid said, coldly.

“I say we get her back and try again while the ability is fresh in her mind,” Damon suggested, changing the subject.

“I say we let her be. She’s out riding and will be much more pleasant if we leave her alone for now,” Chevalier said.

Sam ran into the room quickly with Allen in his arms, he looked terrified.

“What’s wrong, Sam?” Chevalier asked, taking Allen from him.

“Tell him Allen… exactly what you told me,” Sam said.

Chevalier looked at Allen and smiled, “Firemen talking again?”

“No, the bad man was talking,” Allen said, tears welling up in his eyes.

Kyle frowned, “Bad man?”

Allen nodded.

“What is he saying?” Chevalier asked the toddler.

“I don’t want to say, he’s mad,” Allen was crying onto Chevalier’s shoulder.

“Tell them, Child,” Sam said, patting Allen’s back.

Allen looked up, “My daughter…” he said, still sobbing. “You will pay for his death. A life for a life.”

“Who is the Ancient’s daughter?” Maleth asked, confused.

Chevalier handed Allen back to Sam and blurred down the stairs, with Kyle close behind him. Damon shrugged and followed them, along with Maleth and Leonid. They appeared in the stables as Chevalier looked around. Patra was in her stall, but the smell of blood was strong in the area.

Kyle moved stall to stall and disappeared into one of them, gasping. Chevalier appeared at the door and looked down at Emily. She was sitting on blood covered straw, doubled over, and clutching her stomach. Chevalier scooped her up and yelled for the doctor as he blurred into the castle.

“I’m so sorry,” the doctor said as he stepped out of her room. “She lost the baby.”

Chevalier sat in the hallway with his head in his hands, “How is she?”

“She lost a lot of blood, but... I have her sedated. She wasn’t very far along. This could have been worse,” the doctor said sadly, and then walked down the stairs.

Chevalier stood up and walked slowly down the stairs. Heku guards moved quickly out of his way as he walked toward the prison.

Kyle sighed and went in to sit by Emily on the bed. He took her hand and pulled another blanket over her. She was pale and cold. The smell of medicine on her masked the weakening pregnancy scent.

Kyle sat with her as he listened to the sounds from the prison. Guards asked Leonid and Maleth if Chevalier should be stopped, but they were told to leave him be. Screams echoed off of the walls as Encala prisoners were cruelly tortured and torn to shreds. The worst was the Encala Elder. Kyle tried to ignore the agonizing screams as he was tortured for hours before Chevalier finally lost control and tore him apart.

Sam whisked Allen by the bed quickly when he went to lay Allen down for the night. Kyle watched them, silently, still holding her cold hand. As the night passed into morning, Emily began to stir and mumble in her sleep. Kyle whispered a message to Chevalier that she was waking up.

Chevalier appeared in the doorway. His clothes torn, and covered in blood. He hissed when he saw Kyle holding her hand.

“Don’t let her see you like that,” Kyle whispered, ignoring the threat.

Chevalier disappeared and returned twenty minutes later, showered and clean. Kyle stood up and blurred from the room, shutting the door behind him. He yelled at the guards as one of them headed into the room.

“My orders were that she’s not to be alone with a single heku,” the guard said to Kyle.

“I’m giving you new orders, leave them alone,” Kyle snapped at him.

“The order came from the Elders, step down,” the guard said.

“You’ll have to kill me to get in that room,” Kyle said, angrily.

Emily opened her eyes when she heard the shouting and then looked at Chevalier. He sat down beside her and took her hand.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered.

Chevalier shook his head, “It wasn’t your fault. We’ll get him, I promise you.”

Emily sat up, grasping her stomach and winced. Chevalier put an arm around her to help her up. She took the orange juice from beside the bed and drank some. When she tried to stand up, he stopped her.

“I just need a shower,” she said, and he let her up, “alone.”

He nodded and left the room so she could have some privacy. The shower served a dual purpose, not only did she still smell like blood, but she was testing to see if she was strong enough. She had a plan that was already set in motion.

Emily slipped on a t-shirt and jeans, ignoring the pain the movement caused. Her shoes were the hardest, but she bit her lip and emerged from the room fully dressed. The fifteen gathered heku looked at her when she stepped out.

“Are you going somewhere?” one of them asked her, and she nodded.

“Emily, you can’t leave,” Chevalier said, taking her hand and trying to lead her back into the room.

“I can… I need to go to the store,” she said, and slipped her purse over her shoulder.

“Anything you need we can get you,” he said, frustrated when he saw her set her jaw.

“I’m going,” she said.

“Doctor?” Chevalier called, and he blurred to them.

The doctor looked shocked when he saw Emily about to leave, “You can’t go, you aren’t well.”

“I am too,” she said, irritated, and started down the stairs.

“I’ll go with you then,” Chevalier told her.

Emily turned to him, “Stay here, make plans for an Encala attack,” she said to him with an icy chill. He looked closely at her. Her words seemed to have an underlying meaning, but he couldn’t quite place it.

“You… and you…” she said, pointing to two strange heku guards, “You’re coming with me.”

The two guards got an approving nod from Chevalier, and followed her out to the Durango in the garage. Emily climbed in, again ignoring the pain and drove out of the city.

“Give me your cell phones,” she said, holding her hand out. The guards frowned, but handed her the two phones. She rolled down the window and threw them out when they crossed a bridge. The guards eyes grew wide as they saw them splash into the water.

Emily got onto I-80 and passed the city.

“Where exactly are we going shopping?” one of them asked when the last exit passed by them.

“How fast can you run?” she asked, ignoring his question.

“What do you mean?”

“Is that a hard question? How fast can you run?” she snapped.

“I don’t know… thirty miles an hour or so. A lot faster for short distances,” one of them said, looking at her nervously.

Emily stepped harder on the gas and sped toward the west. She ignored all of the questions the guards threw at her. She drove through the day, pulling over to the side of the road just as the sun set over the horizon.

“Give me your wallets,” she said, holding out her hand.

“Why?” one of them asked.

“Do it,” she snapped, and they both handed over the only money they had.

“Now get out,” she said, watching them.

“No,” they both told her.

Emily turned to the one closest to the door and let go one small piece of her abilities. He screamed and grabbed his chest, and then scrambled to get out of the Durango. The other followed him. When Emily spun out back onto the Interstate, the door shut hard with the momentum.

“He’s going to kill us,” one of the guards said, watching her go.

“Yes he is,” the other agreed, and began the long run back to Council City.

Emily drove through the night and then left the Interstate and pulled onto a dirt road and stopped. She slipped out of the Durango and walked a ways off into the desert.

“I’m here, come and get me,” she hissed into the wind. Only a few minutes passed before someone placed a blindfold over her eyes and secured her hands behind her back. She was put into a vehicle and could feel as it sped off.

“You swear the blindfold will keep us safe?” one of the Encala asked.

“Yes, the Elder told us that if she can’t see you… she can’t turn you to ash,” a weak voice said to him.

They drove in silence. Emily wasn’t sure for how long, because of the blindfold, but she was relieved to be out of the car when they finally stopped. A rough hand took her arm and led her into a building. She heard hisses and hushed whispering as she passed.

“Where does he want her?” a cold voice said.

“Put her in a cell until we are ready. Keep her eyes and hands bound,” someone hissed.

Emily was thrown into a cold cell, and she felt around with her foot until she found a bed, then sat down to wait.

“I’m sure she’s fine. She has two guards with her. She probably needs to be alone,” Chevalier said, as the night drew on with no word from Emily.

Kyle nodded but continued to pace, “I hope so.”

Sam brought Allen in for bed.

“Good night” Chevalier said, picking him up in a hug.

“No, it’s not,” Allen mumbled, his bottom lip pushed out.

Chevalier smiled, “What’s wrong?”

Allen shrugged, “My firemen quit talking. They are broken.”

“I’m sure they will talk again when Mommy gets back,” Chevalier said, kissing Allen on the cheek.

“She’s not coming back though.”

“Yes she is. She’s just upset right now,” Kyle said, trying to fight the feeling something was wrong.

“Yeah I guess,” Allen sighed, and put his firemen on the floor when Chevalier sat him down.

“Good night, Son,” Chevalier said, mussing his hair.

“What will he do to Mommy?” Allen asked Chevalier.

“What will who do to her?”

“The bad man.”

“The bad man doesn’t have Mommy,” Chevalier said, but the first pangs of panic began.

“Yes he does, that’s where she went. To get the bad man.”

Chevalier knelt down by Allen and took his shoulders in his hands, “What do you mean?”

“The bad man, the one I told you about. She went to him,” Allen said, looking into Chevalier’s eyes.

“How do you know?”

“He said so. He was laughing, and then the firemen quit talking,” Allen said. Sam took him into the bedroom.

Chevalier turned to Kyle, “She wouldn’t.”

Kyle sighed, “Yes, she would.”

The two guards who left with Emily appeared beside Chevalier, “Sir, she left.”

Chevalier growled, “You let her go?”

“She used her powers on us… took our cell phones and wallets and then drove off. We got here as fast as we could,” one of them stammered, afraid of the Elder’s wrath.

Two days passed before Emily was taken out of the cell. Her stomach growled angrily, as they hadn’t fed her.

“Where to?” someone asked, taking her arm.

“He wants her prepared for the swearing in,” someone answered. Emily was pulled forward again.

“Stay here,” someone ordered her, and she felt the hand leave her arm. She listened carefully, but couldn’t hear anyone. She jumped when the door behind her opened, and she could hear voices.

“Just as long as you don’t take her blindfold off. She can’t see you or she will kill you,” a female said.

“It’s about time we get this Child. The Elder had me make this dress months ago,” another female said.

“Yes, Vaughn is going to love it.”

The heku pulled her clothes off. Emily didn’t talk to them, and didn’t fight them. They ended up cutting her shirt off because they were afraid it would pull the blind off, and they also weren’t sure how to get it off without freeing her hands.

Emily winced slightly when the cold hands touched her as they slipped a piece of soft velvet around her chest and fastened it behind her. It felt like no more than a strapless bra, but again, she didn’t complain. The skirt was also soft, like velvet, and fit obscenely low on her hips. She could tell it was no more than two strips of material, and could feel the air against her exposed thighs.

Someone began to tug her hair into a bun, while another placed a coiled arm band on both of her upper arms. The heku women talked, irritatingly, about nothing important the entire time they got Emily ready for the swearing in, and she said nothing to them.

“Finally, we meet again,” the Ancient said when he was alone with Emily.

She stood still, not answering. She felt his dry, rough hands trail down her face, and finally rest under her chin, “You look so much like my Elizabeth.”

“You killed my baby,” she hissed at him.

“It was a male child, of no use to us,” he said coldly. “Besides, you killed my mortal. He was to be a general when he turned immortal.”

She listened carefully as he walked around her.

“You’re shorter than your mother, more muscular though.” She felt his hands move across the contours of her abdomen. Emily jumped slightly when she felt a light scratching on her thigh.

“I expect full obedience from you, Child,” he said, and she could feel his breath on her face. “You cannot turn enough of the Encala to ash to make it worth your pain if you try. Obedience will be enforced through punishment. Do you understand?”

Emily nodded.

“You turned me to ash once… as a child, you were two,” he said, still walking around her slowly. “Quite painful, I assure you. Luckily, I wasn’t alone, and the Encala were able to revive me.”

Emily heard the door open and the Ancient speak, “Ahhh, Vaughn, I was waiting for you.”

“I’m sorry to have kept you waiting,” a deep voice replied.

“This is my daughter, Emily,” the Ancient said.

“Let me look at her,” Vaughn said. Emily’s skin crawled as she felt his eyes on her.

“She is beautiful,” Vaughn hissed, and Emily felt his hands run from her waist down to her exposed thighs, “She’s just a little thing though.”

“Do not underestimate the Winchesters though, Vaughn,” the Ancient said, amused.

Emily fought the urge to pull away when she felt Vaughn run his nose along her chin to her neck and inhale deeply, “Mmmm, soon you will be mine, Child.”

“We will be expecting a female child soon,” the Ancient said, pleased.

“I don’t think that will be a problem,” Vaughn replied, and then kissed her roughly. His hand wound around the back of her neck. Emily didn’t fight, didn’t try to get away, but she also didn’t return the kiss.

“You’ll have to wait until after the ceremony,” the Ancient laughed.

“I’ll have that ring off of her finger by midnight,” Vaughn said, and his hands followed down the curve of her back.

Emily felt the blindfold loosening and the sudden brightness made her squeeze her eyes shut. She opened them and let them adjust to the light. The Ancient was still in the room. His skin was pale and cracked with age. He smiled at her, and his blackened teeth shone. Vaughn was a hulking heku. Emily didn’t even come to his sternum. He was extremely muscular, and only wearing a kilt and cape. He was looking over her body and smiling.

“Behave, Child, and this will go easier,” the Ancient reminded her.

“Release my hands,” she said softly.

Emily’s feet left the ground as Vaughn put his hands under her arms, and lifted her up so she was even with him.

“Look at those eyes,” he said, grinning at her. His breath smelled like decaying flesh, and Emily’s stomach turned.

“Yes, I always loved her mother’s eyes,” the Ancient said, sadly.

Vaughn moved his face to her neck and ran his tongue along the pounding vein.

“Tonight, Child,” he said, and set her back down. “Can we release her hands?”

“Yes, yes, it’s her eyes we have to worry about,” the Ancient chuckled.

Vaughn moved behind her and released her hands, and then wound his arms around her shoulders. Emily’s injured shoulder screamed, but she forced the pain down.

“It’s time,” the Ancient said. “I will see you in there.” He left quickly, leaving Emily and Vaughn alone.

Vaughn began to kiss Emily’s neck and shoulders as his hands ran lightly across her exposed skin, “Mmm you will love me, Child. I promise you that.”

“Not now, not now! Get going, Vaughn,” she heard a female heku say. Vaughn chuckled and pulled away from her, leaving the room quickly.

Emily was left alone, and she looked around the room. There was a single empty closet, but the door had a mirror on it so she stepped in front of it. She was right about the feel of velvet. Her outfit was blood-

red and stitched with tiny, sparkling jewels. She tried to pull the skirt up higher. It felt like at any minute, it could fall off of her, but it wouldn't move.

"You can do this, Emily," she said to herself, and then moved away from the mirror.

"Come, Child," someone said, and she turned to the heku at the door. He was a stern looking older man, balding and withered.

Emily stepped toward him and he led the way. She followed silently, watching the hallways as she walked past. He stopped in front of two large stone doors.

"You walk down the aisle to Vaughn. He's been sworn in, now you just need presented to the Council," he said to her.

Emily nodded. She'd done this once before, and was dreading the judgmental eyes on her.

As the doors opened, the great hall fell silent and all eyes turned to Emily. She saw Vaughn standing on the platform at the other end of the room. Emily began the slow walk toward him. The hisses and inhales from the crowd made her want to run, but she held her course, focusing on the Ancient, her ultimate target.

Vaughn smiled broadly as she approached him, and he reached out and touched her waist, “I present to the Council, Emily Winchester.”

There were more gasps and soft muffled voices as the news shocked the gathered Encala.

“Step forward, Child,” one of the Encala Elders said. Emily stepped up onto the stairs, ignoring the empty Elder’s chair.

“Are you, in fact, one of the fabled Winchesters?” he asked her.

“I am.”

“And do you hold their powers?”

“Yes”

Again, a murmur ran through the hundreds of heku in the audience.

“Will you show us?”

“Yes,” she said to him.

He smiled, “Turn around, Child, pick one.”

Emily turned to face the heku. They avoided her eyes, and began to shift uncomfortably. She didn’t care who she picked, tonight she hoped to turn most of them to ash before she was killed.

“You,” she said, pointing to an Encala that looked a lot like Vaughn. He stepped forward and bowed at the Elders.

“Do it, Child,” the Elder said, leaning forward.

Emily looked at him and the heku turned to ash in an instant. She ignored the panic that started in the audience, and turned back to the Elder.

“Impressive, Emily, your mother never could do that,” the Ancient said, smiling proudly.

“Calm… calm…” the Elder said, motioning for the audience to be quiet.

“Do you then, Emily Winchester, agree to take Vaughn as your mate, and to break the bond you have with the Equites?” he asked, smiling.

“I do not,” she said, turning her eyes to the Ancient. Suddenly, a blindfold was placed over her eyes, and her hands were bound in front of her.

“You do not have to agree, Child, for it to happen,” the Elder told her.

“A blindfold?” she asked, smiling.

“It’s merely a precaution. We cannot have you attempting to kill one of us,” she heard the Ancient say.

“So the blindfold will keep you safe?” she asked.

“We have studied the Winchesters carefully. We know of your weaknesses,” she heard Vaughn say at her side.

Emily was pushed roughly to a velvet wall, and her hands were pulled up. The binds were attached to something far above her head. She felt a hand on her back, and then hard lips pressed against hers. She fought to keep her anger at bay. She would need it soon enough.

“I expect none of this attitude tonight,” Vaughn said, pulling away from her.

“Now for the last bit of news…” Vaughn said. “Tonight I make Emily my mate.”

“You are so wrong,” she said, smiling, and she suddenly felt the eyes on her again.

“Obey, Child,” she heard the Ancient hiss.

“You were wrong about something, though,” Emily said. Her skin broke into goose bumps at the thought of what she was about to do. Her heart also sank. She knew that tonight, she would die. She only hoped that Chevalier and Allen could someday forgive her.

“How dare you speak to us like this!” she heard Vaughn say sternly.

“Blindfolds?” Emily asked, ignoring him. “What are blindfolds to the daughter of an ancient?”

Everyone grew quiet, and Emily smiled.

The fury, the rage, the pain, every emotion Emily felt was suddenly pushed outward. Images flashed through her mind of her father, of Chevalier, and little Allen. She could hear the screams echoing off the walls, and the feeling of exhilaration flew through her, making her stronger. She felt the world begin to spin, and a trickle of blood dripped onto her lips. The pain of the last few months and the loss of the baby re-energized her, and she sent the emotions it brought toward the audience again.

Emily had no idea if what she was doing was working. She waited for the pain of her limbs being torn from her body, but it hadn’t happened yet. She could feel the terror and fear in the room, and the screams were growing fainter. She pushed the fear, the horror, and the anger outward, wave after wave. Her ears began to ring so loudly it drowned out the sound of the heku’s pleas for the burning to stop. Her legs grew weak, but she continued to push as her heart beat so hard it felt like it would jump out of her chest.

She finally fell back against the velvet wall when her strength gave way, but a new found anger hit her. The anger that she was being forced to

leave Allen without a mother, and she drew more emotions from it and continued her assault on the Encala.

The sounds all stopped. Her rapid breathing was all that she could hear. There were no more shouts, no more pleadings, and the silence was eerie. Emily fought against the binds on her wrists, but was unable to free them. She ran her head along her arms and pushed the blindfold off of her eyes. She looked around the room, and felt an enormous sense of relief. All she could see were the ashen remains of the Encala. The Elder's chairs were empty except for the swirls of ash. She scanned the rest of the room and nothing moved, nothing made a sound.

Emily felt the pounding in her head as she waited for more Encala to come. She would wait for death. The world was still spinning and the blood continued to drip down her lips. An alarm sounded from far away and she knew the deaths had been discovered. They would come for her now. She was ready for death. The pain in her head was growing worse and her injured shoulder sent painful stabs down her back and arm.

She suddenly looked up at her hands. The pain was causing her to sweat and the binds were slipping. She pulled and wiggled her wrists and was finally able to free them. She fell against an Elder's chair and got to her knees. She quickly looked through the piles of clothes, and found a small bag. She scooped up the ashes on the chair of the Ancient, and then took

small amounts off each of the Council's chairs. She then attached the bag firmly to her wrist.

Emily got unsteadily to her feet and walked out of the great hall. Her bare feet were covered in the ash of the Encala. She used the wall for support as she scanned the long hallways of the Encala's palace. The entire palace was quiet. The only thing she could hear was the far away siren. Her hands ran along the blood-red walls as she walked along the corridors. Her bare footsteps seemed noisy in the silence.

A door slammed off to her right, and she heard heavy footsteps fill the palace.

"Find her," she heard a strange heku order, and she turned toward the sound. She wasn't going down without a fight.

Emily put her hand against the wall to steady herself. The pounding in her head became stronger and she shut her eyes for a second, trying to regain the control. She wiped the blood off of her lips with a curtain, but a steady stream continued to flow. She felt a tickle in her ear and found blood forming. She knew this was it. The attacks on the Encala were going to kill her.

"Looking for me?" she yelled, and the sound of her voice echoed off of the walls. She heard the footsteps stop.

“I killed your Elders… I killed your Ancient,” she screamed, ignoring how it made her head spin.

“I did it in the name of the Equites… if you don’t like that, then I dare you to come and get me,” she roared, and smiled when the footsteps came closer.

She braced herself for one last fight. She felt the anger in her again as she thought of her home at the palace. She saw the shadows of the approaching heku and readied herself to fight them. She knew it would be the last time, they would kill her.

Emily gasped when she saw the green capes of the Equites. She frowned, her mind whirling with confusion as a hazy cloud covered her thoughts. She watched as over fifty heku in green stopped and stared at her, their eyes wide. She saw someone pushing toward the front, and took a step back when Chevalier and Kyle appeared from the gathered crowd. Her mind tried to grasp why they joined the Encala.

Chevalier had heard her yell, and immediately changed course to find her. As he pushed through the guards, he froze and looked at her. Emily was leaning against the wall. She was pale and her eyes were dazed. There was blood dripping down the side of her neck and from her nose. She looked up at Chevalier, and the whites of her eyes had turned scarlet.

Kyle held out his hand to hold back the guards.

“Don’t move,” he whispered. “She’s confused. We don’t need her turning us to ash, too.”

“Emily,” Chevalier said softly, not moving toward her.

“Are you here to kill me?” she asked, her words slurred.

Chevalier shook his head, “No, Emily, we’re here to help.”

“Why then… why would you join the Encala?”

“We’re still Equites. We came to get you,” he explained.

“But I killed your Elders.”

“She’s not making sense,” Kyle whispered.

“Too much killing,” Chevalier sighed softly.

“Emily, listen to me. We’re here to take you back to the palace, to Allen,” Chevalier tried again.

“This is mine!” she growled, holding the small draw-string bag in her hands.

“We won’t take it from you,” Kyle said.

Emily turned and stumbled away from them. She knew she had to get away. She couldn't clear her mind enough to ash any more. They were going to kill her, but she had to at least try to run. How could Chevalier and Kyle join the Encala? She was mad at them for it. Mad that they would bring Allen here to live after she died. She felt a hand on her shoulder and turned.

"Emily, we're not going to hurt you," Chevalier said, and he put a hand against her back to steady her.

"How could you? How could you join the Encala after what they did?" she asked, as a bloody tear spilled from her red eyes.

"Emily, we're Equites," he said, and wiped the tear off of her cheek.

"I'm an Equites," she whispered, looking toward the other heku gathered.

"I know."

"So we're enemies now," she mumbled, her words still slurred.

He reached down to pick her up, but she jerked backwards against the wall.

"I won't marry Vaughn, just so you can lay a claim to me," she hissed.

“You don’t have to,” he said softly, trying to catch her eyes and lock her gaze.

“You can kill me if you want… but I’m dead anyway… I die an Equites,” she whispered, and ran her fingers through the blood coming out of her ear.

“We have to get out of here,” Kyle whispered, too softly for Emily to hear.

“Come on Emily,” Chevalier said, walking backward down the hallway. “Come on… follow me.”

She frowned and took an uneven step toward him, “You’re a traitor.”

“I know, now come,” he said, sternly.

“You’re all traitors,” she yelled, scanning her bloody eyes across the green cloaked heku.

“Keep coming, come on,” Chevalier said, holding his hand out toward her.

Emily pressed her hands against the sides of her head, “I can’t think.”

“She’s pretty bad off. Do you think she can still ash us?” Kyle whispered softly.

“I don’t know,” Chevalier said, watching as Emily walked slowly toward him, leaning against the velvet walls of the Encala palace.

As they stepped out into the sunlight, Emily saw the large helicopters sitting on the lush green lawn. She felt the cool grass on her feet and looked down to see bloody ash caked on them. She looked up at the heku again and wiped the last of the blood from under her nose. She saw the heku begin to pile into the massive helicopters and wondered how they could leave the ground with that much weight.

“Keep coming, you’re almost there,” Chevalier said when she stopped moving.

He stepped up into the helicopter and reached down for Emily, “Give me your hands.”

Emily looked up at his hands and took them. She felt her feet leave the ground and reached her foot up to step into the helicopter as Kyle grabbed her around the waist to help her. Her exposed leg faced Chevalier, and he looked at her outer thigh and glared, then pulled her the rest of the way inside.

Emily sat in the chair and looked around, confused. She couldn’t remember where she was. The cloud on her mind was stopping her from

remembering. She felt hands buckle her in, and she fought against the restraint.

“Leave her, she’s too weak to get out,” Chevalier said, as one of the heku guards tried to take her hands.

“Get us out of here,” Kyle ordered, and the helicopters took off up above the Encala city.

Emily eventually leaned her head back against the seat and shut her eyes. She was suddenly feeling extremely tired.

During the ride back to Council City, Chevalier was able to study her. Other than the blood he noticed before, she looked ok. His eyes were continually drawn to the signs the Encala had put on her to ensure their claim.

“Did you see her right thigh?” Kyle asked.

Chevalier nodded, “I did. It’s not enflamed. I think it might be ink.”

“They had enough time for a tattoo,” Kyle said, making sure not to look at her for too long.

“We’ll find out later,” Chevalier growled.

“How is Damon taking being called a traitor?”

“He’ll get over it,” Chevalier said, he couldn’t help but smile. “I think her loyalty impressed him.”

Kyle just nodded and watched as the helicopters parted. Most landed on the outskirts of the city, while theirs circled the palace and landed on the helipad.

The helicopter engines fell silent, and everyone looked at Emily as she slept.

“Is it safe to pick her up?” Kyle asked, raising his eyebrows.

Chevalier shrugged, “I have no idea… if she ashes me… just… revive me quickly.”

As Chevalier’s hands touched Emily, her eyes jerked open, and she grabbed the bag on her wrist.

“This is mine,” she yelled, and then glared at him.

He continued to pick her up, and jumped out of the helicopter, landing softly on the roof of the palace.

The doctor was waiting by Emily’s bed when Chevalier stepped into the room. He watched, concerned, as Emily was laid gently on the bed. She was gripping the covers tightly and panting. Her red eyes were watching everyone around her.

The doctor reached down to take her pulse, and barely brushed against the leather bag. Emily grabbed it and sat up, “This is mine.”

The doctor nodded, “I won’t take it from you.”

He looked curiously at Chevalier.

“She’s not making sense,” he whispered, too softly for Emily to hear. “She’s confused, almost in a daze. The original Winchester died by killing too many heku at one time and Emily has her record beat,”

The doctor nodded and whispered back, “This will be easier if we can sedate her.”

Maleth and Leonid walked in and ordered all of the extra heku out of the room. They looked at Emily and forced a smile.

“How are you, Emily?” Leonid asked her.

“I won’t join you. I’m an Equites,” she hissed at him. “How could you join the Encala?”

The doctor was quickly preparing a strong injection.

Leonid frowned.

“I don’t care what you say. I won’t marry Vaughn,” she said, trying to get up, but Chevalier held her down.

Emily screamed when she felt the pinch of the needle, but jerked away too slowly. The doctor was able to administer the full amount.

“How could you?” she asked. Her words were soft and garbled.

As soon as she was sedated, Chevalier pulled her skirt away from her thigh and bent down to look at the runes. The other Elders hissed when they saw it and grew furious.

“My God,” the doctor said, taking a step back.

“I think it’s ink. I don’t think they were able to tattoo it yet,” Chevalier said. He brushed it with his finger, but it didn’t come off.

“It may have to wear off over time,” Kyle said, bending down to look.

“Arm bands, too,” Maleth said, touching the coiled serpent around Emily’s upper arms.

Chevalier nodded, “That’s easy enough to get rid of.”

He reached over and slipped the leather pouch off of her wrist and opened it, “It’s full of ashes.”

Kyle frowned, “That’s it? Ashes?”

Chevalier nodded, “It’s important to her. I’m guessing it’s the Ancient.”

The doctor stood up after he examined her, “There’s no physical damage. No one knows enough about the Winchester powers to know what affect this will have on her in the long-term.”

Chevalier sighed, “So we wait, see if she dies?”

The doctor nodded, “I’m sorry, that’s all I can say. We can’t take her to the hospital.”

“I know,” Chevalier said, taking her hand. “Ulrich’s first daughter, Elizabeth, died by killing a few hundred heku. There had to have been close to a thousand in that one room, then the servants and guards.”

Kyle nodded, “The entire palace was turned to ash.”

“The reports have come down. Emily also wiped out over half of the city,” Maleth said, softly.

“Leave us. I have to get her out of these clothes, they disgust me,” Chevalier said, picking her up. He cradled her limp body in his arms and carried her into the bathroom.

With one hand, he filled the tub and gently took the red velvet off of her. He tried to avoid looking at the ancient runes on her thigh as he sat her down in the water.

Supporting her with one hand, Chevalier began to gently wash the blood and ash off of her. He had to change the water four times before he was able to clean it all off. After he washed the blood from her hair, he pulled her from the water and dried her off on the bed. He looked around and found a simple white nightgown and slipped it on her. Once the covers were pulled up over her, he sat down by her side.

"You can come back," he whispered. Kyle, Maleth, and Leonid came back into the room.

Kyle smiled, "That's more like it."

Chevalier ran his fingers over the golden snakes curling up her arms.

"Did it come off?" Maleth asked, and Chevalier shook his head.

The doctor came back carrying an I.V. set up, "I have an idea."

Chevalier looked over at him, "She won't keep it in."

"She won't have a choice," he said, putting the supplies down. "My suggestion is a medically induced coma."

Kyle frowned, "For how long?"

"I say two weeks. Though when the blood is gone from her eyes, we can try earlier," he said, looking at Chevalier for permission.

“She won’t wake up at all for two weeks?”

“No,” the doctor said, and when Chevalier nodded, he inserted the I.V. catheter and started the slow drip.

“Get the word out. Find out how to remove an ink signum qualitas off of a mortal,” Chevalier said.

“I’m on it,” Kyle said, blurring from the room.

“The Valle are requesting an audience with us,” Maleth said, watching Emily sleeping peacefully.

“Now?” Chevalier growled.

“They will be here in a few days.”

“In the meantime,” Leonid said. “We would like to know what happened in the palace.”

“Everyone was killed. Emily is the only one left that would know,” he said, watching her sleep.

“I do hope she remembers that we are Equites when she wakes up.” Maleth said softly.

Chevalier nodded and smiled, “It wasn’t just you two. We were all traitors, and she made sure and let us know that she’s an Equites.”

“I never really thought she considered herself one of us,” Leonid said.

“Neither did I,” Chevalier told him, and kissed her forehead softly.

Chapter 10 - Peace

The Council was seated in the council chambers as they waited for the Valle to arrive. Emily was four days into her two week sleep, and everyone was anxious for her to wake up and fill in a lot of blanks from the Encala attack.

As the door opened, the Council looked toward the arriving Valle. All three of the Valle Elders walked in quietly with their entourage, and stood before the Equites.

Maleth stood, “We’ll skip the pleasantries and ask right out, why have you summoned us?”

The tallest Valle Elder stepped forward, “Thank you for honoring us with your presence.”

Damon looked at Chevalier, and he shrugged.

“We have come to your beautiful home to ask for a treaty of peace,” the Valle said.

“Don’t we need to be at war to require a peace treaty?” Maleth asked.

“No, no, we don’t. We just want to ensure that what happened to the Encala… won’t be in the plans for the Valle,” he said, smiling.

“We did not attack first,” Maleth said, his eyes narrowing.

“Oh of course not. We know you would never do that,” the Valle said quickly.

“Unless you are planning an attack, then there’s no reason for you to fear us,” Damon said, not standing.

“We cannot help but fear you. The rumors from the Encala are terrifying… to any heku.”

“Rumors?” Maleth asked.

“Yes… we have heard what your army did to the Encala palace. We don’t know the reasoning, but would like to see that kind of destruction avoided,” another Valle Elder said.

“Our army?” Leonid asked, smiling.

“Their path of annihilation was horrific, and the Encala are in ruins. We are not here to judge your actions, but to try to negotiate a treaty that will ensure that we are not next,” he said, nervously.

“We have no plans on attacking the Valle… at this time,” Damon said, watching them carefully.

“Will you not sign a treaty then? Promise us that, in the future, we will handle things civilly, and not with wanton destruction?”

“We are a civilized faction,” Leonid said, irritated.

“I am so sorry. I was not implying that you are not,” the Valle Elder said, fidgeting nervously.

“I’m getting the impression that you are in a panic over something you’ve done, though I can’t quite figure out what,” Chevalier leaned forward.

“N... Nothing… we assure you.”

“Have you been to the Encala palace?” Damon asked.

The Valle Elders glanced at each other uneasily.

“What... did you… do?” he asked them, and stood up.

“We... we just wanted to help,” the tallest Valle Elder said.

“Explain yourself,” Leonid growled.

“With that kind of mass death, it left them without any leadership, without even one heku among them that could revive any of those that were killed.”

“Let me guess, so you decided to do it for them,” Damon scowled.

“We had no choice!” he said, taking a step back. “We cannot have only two factions. It’s never been done.”

“How many did you return?” Chevalier asked, angrily.

“We were only able to revive one of the leaders, the rest were… well… not complete enough to do.”

Chevalier smiled as he thought of Emily’s little leather pouch.

When the Equites did not respond, he continued, “We… we were… worried. The Encala were left with no leadership, no laws, or anyone to enforce them. The only reason we helped was to keep the Encala from turning feral.”

“Oh yes, I’m sure that’s the only reason you did it,” Damon growled.

“Who did you revive?” Maleth asked them, frowning.

“It was their Chief Enforcer, that’s all,” the Valle answered.

“Oh, so the one heku that could revive more,” Damon snapped.

“We didn’t know who it was… we just saw one untouched… shall we say… set of remains, and revived him.”

“What other assistance have you given them?” Damon asked.

“That is all, we swear! They are still an opposing faction, after all.”

“I find it unacceptable that you went behind our backs, after our attack, and revived one of their leaders,” Chevalier said angrily.

“We don’t see it as going behind your backs. What were we supposed to do? Allow the Encala faction to fall into ruins and leave all of their heku without any kind of direction?” the Valle Elder pulled at his collar nervously.

“Yes, that is exactly what you should have done,” Damon said, leaning toward them.

“You act as if the attack was unprovoked and out of line,” Chevalier hissed.

“I stress that we do not think that… we know you would never attack without reason. However…” the Valle said, glancing at the other Elders quickly.

“Yes?” Damon said.

“It seemed a bit... harsh, shall we say. The Encala are claiming over 1,800 deaths in their city. We do not judge, but that is the largest attack of our kind, ever.”

“Again, warranted,” Chevalier said to them.

“Then to… take…” the Valle Elder shuddered, “parts of them, so they could not be revived. We do not feel that was the proper thing to do.”

“Proper?” Damon asked, sitting back down.

“Yes, that also has never been done. Your punishment had been dealt. Something like that could take hundreds of years to recover from, but by taking what you did, it could be thousands before the Encala are stable again.”

“I see,” Maleth said, glaring. “We do see your point, but as you do not know the reasoning behind the attack, we feel you should not say that to us.”

“You are right, we apologize,” the Valle Elder said.

There was an awkward silence in the council chambers as the Valle looked at one another and nervously stood before their enemies.

“Was there something else you wanted?” Damon asked, after a few minutes of silence.

“We…” the smallest Valle Elder stepped forward after glancing at the others, “We feel it would only be fair, you know, in keeping with the peace… if you would share your new ability with us.”

Leonid looked at Maleth curiously.

“We don’t know what you mean by ability, please elaborate,” Maleth said to them.

“It is obvious to us… that the… Winchester ability has been passed to the Equites. That puts you with an unfair advantage, and we feel to keep peace in the factions, it should be given to each of us,” he said, smiling.

“I see,” Maleth said, sitting back in his chair.

“It would purely be used to keep equality among the factions.”

“How would the ability to kill one another quickly, and in great amounts, be of a peaceful nature?” Damon asked, truly curious.

“It would be similar to when the mortals discovered nuclear weapons… because each country had the same power, it was never used,” the Valle explained.

“Oh, well of course… let’s call Emily down and have her share,” Damon said, grinning.

The Valle turned and looked at the others and then back to the Equites, “So you understand and comply?”

“No,” Damon said. “I just figured a dim-witted idea, warranted a dim-witted response.”

The Valle wrung his hands nervously, “We don’t feel that this is an unintelligent request, it is fairness, for peace.”

“Yes, I heard your excuse.”

“Shall we vote then?” Maleth asked, looking down the row of Equites.

The Valle watched them anxiously.

“All in favor of sharing our new found ability, raise your hand,” Maleth said, watching the Valle instead of taking count of the Equites votes.

“Please, think of the peace… we could all cooperate, and the ancient wars would end. Won’t more of you vote yes?” the Valle asked.

The entire Equites Council looked over at Damon, whose hand was raised. Chevalier rolled his eyes.

“I’m sorry, the majority vote is no,” Maleth said, ignoring Damon.

"Please, talk to them, reason with them to see your side," the Valle asked Damon frantically.

"Wait… weren't we voting to turn these heku to ash?" Damon asked, frowning.

The Valle all nervously took steps toward the door.

"No, you misunderstood," Maleth said, laughing. "We were voting to share that trick with our new friends here."

"Oh, sorry," Damon said, lowering his hand.

"We see now, there is no chance of peace," the Valle said nervously.

"We are at peace now. We will not consider us at war until you have done something to provoke it," Leonid said.

"May we ask the Lady then? If she will bestow the gift on us?" the tallest Valle Elder asked.

"No, you may not," Leonid said, coldly.

"You speak for her now? Does she not have the ability to answer for herself?"

"Yes, she does… but no, you may not ask her."

“Very well, we will take this as an act of aggression.” He tried to threaten the Council.

“Oh?” Chevalier asked, suddenly interested.

“We won’t attack, but you can see how we will need to protect ourselves.”

“By all means,” he said, grinning.

After a few minutes of silence, the Valle filed out of the council chambers nervously.

“That was interesting,” Damon said, leaning back in his chair.

“1,800,” Leonid whispered, looking at Chevalier.

“She’s paying for it, though,” he reminded them.

“You said the original Winchester died by killing a few hundred?”

“Yes, Sam was there.”

Leonid frowned, “Does Emily know that?”

“Yes”

The realization hit for the rest of the Council. Emily went into the Encala palace, fully expecting to die.

“How is she?” Maleth asked. The heku were all anxious to hear about her, but her room had been sealed, and Kyle wasn’t letting anyone in or answering any questions.

“We don’t know. We won’t until she wakes up,” Chevalier said.

“And the mark?” Leonid asked.

“Still there, it doesn’t seem to be fading,” Chevalier answered with a hint of anger in his voice.

“Are the bands still on her arms then?

“Yes, which means whoever they were for is alive.”

“Great”

“It’s not my place, I understand that, but Chevalier… you need to feed. You are looking pale, and you have to be very thirsty,” Maleth suggested.

“I am not leaving her.”

“Then let us bring a donor in.”

“To the palace?” he asked. Mortals weren’t allowed to enter the palace.

“We will take precautions.”

“No, I will go soon.”

Maleth nodded and pushed his chair back. The Council slowly left the chambers, and Chevalier went back up to his room. Kyle was standing outside of the door.

“The doctor is in there now,” he said to Chevalier.

Chevalier nodded and opened the door. Both he and Kyle looked as the doctor bent Emily’s left knee, and pushed her leg toward her chest. They blurred to Emily’s bed and Chevalier threw the doctor toward the wall. He crashed against the stone walls, and Kyle pinned him to the floor.

“What do you think you are doing?” he hissed.

“Stop please! If we don’t exercise her muscles, they will atrophy,” the doctor said, his eyes wide.

“Do what?” Chevalier frowned down at him.

“Her muscles can’t go unmoved for two weeks. I was simply exercising them,” he explained quickly.

“Get up,” Chevalier said angrily.

“You can read about it if you wish. I can bring in medical journals. Mortals can’t lie still for too long, or their muscles weaken and can become useless,” the doctor explained, standing up slowly.

“Show me,” Chevalier said, taking the doctor’s arm roughly and pushing him toward the bed.

The doctor walked through how to exercise the major muscles in Emily’s arms and legs, and then changed out her I.V. and left quickly.

“I’ve turned it off. She should wake up in a few minutes,” the doctor said, stepping back to watch her.

“Be ready to sedate her again,” Chevalier said.

“I can’t do that for much longer. It’s not good for her body.”

“I don’t care. If she is still dying, we need to buy more time,” he hissed.

The doctor nodded, “Her eyes are clear, and she’s slept for two weeks. I think that should be enough.”

Chevalier and the doctor watched Emily in the quiet room. Kyle was outside of her door still, and they could hear him pacing nervously.

After a few minutes, Emily began to stir. She blinked a few times and then opened her eyes. She stared at the ceiling for a while, and then turned her head to look at Chevalier.

“Good morning,” he said to her softly, afraid to even touch her.

She turned to the doctor and looked at him.

“How are you feeling?” the doctor asked her.

Emily flexed her hands stiffly.

“You will be a little sore for a few days, it will pass, I promise,” he told her.

Without any warning, she reached over and ripped out her I.V.

“Emily, no!” the doctor yelled, and quickly turned it off so it wouldn’t drip all over the floor.

Chevalier chuckled. He was relieved to see a sign that she was still his Emily.

Emily watched Chevalier expressionlessly.

“How are you feeling?” he asked her, touching her cheek softly.

“I’m at the palace?” she whispered.

Chevalier nodded, “Yes, you’re home safe.”

“Are you mad?”

He smiled, “No, I’m not mad.”

“I killed some Encala,” she said, hoarsely.

“Some? Yes you did,” he said, grinning.

“I had a bag,” she whispered, her voice not quite working yet.

“It’s right by you. We didn’t take it.”

“I’m thirsty,” she whispered, and the doctor smiled.

“That’s a good sign.”

“What would you like? Anything,” Chevalier asked her.

“Just orange juice,” she managed to whisper finally.

“Your voice will clear soon,” the doctor assured her.

Emily looked at him, and then turned back to Chevalier. He already had a glass of juice in his hand. Chevalier slid an arm under her shoulders and helped her sit up. She wrapped her stiff fingers around the glass and drank most of it at once.

He laid her back down, and she reached up and ran her fingers along the bands on her upper arm.

“Take these off,” she whispered, frowning.

“I can’t yet. We’ll get them off soon, I promise,” Chevalier told her.

“Why can’t you take them off?” she asked, pulling at them weakly.

“I’ll explain later, ok? Are you hungry?”

Emily nodded.

“Nothing heavy,” the doctor said. “Toast is good.”

“Ok,” Emily whispered, and reached her hand down to scratch at the runes on her leg.

Chevalier kept his face even and pulled the covers back up.

“How mad are the Encala?” she asked softly, as her voice slowly started to come back.

Chevalier chuckled, “I’m not sure mad is quite the word for it.”

She frowned, “I shouldn’t have done it. I wasn’t thinking straight.”

“No one here is mad at you. We all know what you did, and no one’s sorry about it,” he said, taking her hand.

When her toast was delivered, she tried to sit up to swing her legs out of bed, but she wasn't able to move them.

"Why can't I move?" she asked, scared.

"It's ok, you will just be stiff for a few days," the doctor said.

Chevalier put his arm around her again, and lifted her up, then slid her up so she was sitting beside him. She took the toast and ate one before speaking.

"How did I get back here?" she asked, picking up a second piece.

"We went to the palace and brought you back," Chevalier said. He promised himself that he would tell her anything she wanted to know.

"I don't remember that."

"That doesn't surprise me."

Emily absentmindedly scratched at the runes on her thigh again, and ate another piece of toast. Her juice had been refilled, and she reached for it and took another drink.

"Where's Allen?" she looked around the room.

"He's with Sam. We've been trying to keep him away. Seeing you asleep upset him," Chevalier said.

“How long?”

“Two weeks.”

She frowned, “I slept for two weeks?”

“We kept you sedated. I’ll explain everything when you feel better, ok?”

She nodded and scratched at the runes again. She pulled up her nightgown and looked at her thigh.

“What’s that?”

“Something else I will explain later. We’re still working on getting it off.”

“It won’t wash off?”

“No.” He pulled her nightgown back down. He felt fury rising in him at the sight of it.

“I hate that I can’t remember anything after… the…” she said, and sighed.

“It may come back to you later. I’m not sure,” the doctor said to her, and then bowed with a smile and left the room.

“Can I get you something? Anything you want, just ask,” he said smiling.

“I want on your lap,” she said, turning toward him. He lifted her gently and sat her on his lap. Her arms wrapped around his neck, and she leaned against his shoulder, and he smiled.

“I don’t like it,” Chevalier said. “She’s only been awake for four days.”

“Stop talking about me like I’m not here,” Emily said, scowling. “I’m doing it.”

“I’ll be there,” Kyle said.

“I said I wanted Emily at the interviews so you could get a feel of how they handle her,” he said angrily.

“She wasn’t available. I interviewed them… it will be ok,” Kyle assured him.

“Get this off of me,” Emily growled, pulling hard at the bands on her upper arm.

“You can’t pull them off. I told you that,” Chevalier said.

“Why not? You keep saying you’ll tell me later… it’s later…” she looked at him.

“Tonight, ok? I promise.” He smiled at her. Chevalier had been dreading when he would have to tell Emily about the runes. The arm bands, he wasn’t so worried about. He knew they would come off, but so far, no one could figure out how to remove the runes.

“Sure,” she said, and whistled. Ford came running out of Allen’s room and Emily turned to leave.

“Just… be careful,” Chevalier called after her and Kyle as they headed down the stairs.

The first thing Emily did when she got to the stables, was to check on Patra. She stepped into the stall and wrapped her arms around the mare’s neck, “I missed you.”

She smiled and kissed Patra on the nose, and then slipped a bridle on her.

“There have been some changes,” Kyle said, looking to see if the recruits were coming.

Emily stepped out of the stall, leaving Patra inside and shut the door.

“What kind of changes?” Emily asked, walking slowly down the long row of stalls.

Kyle moved with her, “First of all, you no longer have a personal guard.”

“Really?”

Kyle shook his head, “Nope.”

“Ok… what else?” Emily stopped and looked at him.

“So the thirteen current cavalry members won’t be here, they will be on normal duty,” Kyle explained.

“Stop it,” Emily said, batting behind her as she felt a horse smell her hair.

Kyle grinned, “This will be our last round of recruits for now, seven of them. I hand-picked these ones, except for one.”

“Stop it,” Emily said again, and swatted the nose of the horse that was nibbling on her hair.

Kyle had to fight to keep from laughing.

“Which one?” she asked.

“Frank is going to be team lead on this one.”

Emily smiled, “Good, at least one of them won’t be afraid of me… Excuse me!”

Emily spun as the horse kept picking at her hair. She put her hands on her hips when she saw it was Chevalier’s pesky Arabian.

“When did he get here?” she asked, irritated.

“Two weeks ago,” Kyle said, laughing.

“And Damnit?”

“Two stalls down.”

Emily heard the recruits coming up to the stables, “Go do your thing. I have business with this horse.”

Kyle chuckled and walked out of the stables to start the training.

Emily could hear him greeting the heku, and she grabbed a bridle and went into the stall with the huge Arabian Stallion.

“Line up,” Kyle said, and watched as they followed his order.

“I want to go over a couple of rules again… first is, of course, you listen to Emily. I don’t want to hear any ‘she’s a mortal’ crap. She’s in charge of these horses, and you will listen to her and obey what she says,” Kyle said sternly.

The recruits all looked nervously into the stables when they heard a loud crash followed by Emily’s, “Damnit.”

“Eyes back here. She knows what she’s doing,” Kyle said, fighting not to laugh.

“No touching. That rule applies even in situations where you may find it polite to do so. Nothing will get you killed faster than laying a finger on her. Understand?” Kyle continued.

The new recruits all nodded.

“You sonofabitch,” they heard Emily scream, followed by another loud crash.

Everyone looked into the stables again when they heard a stall door slam open. Emily was leading the Arabian out of the stall. He was bridled and saddled. The stallion yanked his head back quickly, and she almost fell into him, but caught herself. She used all of her body weight to pull back, and the stallion finally followed her.

The heku cringed when they smelled a trace of fresh blood, and Kyle turned to them quickly and glared, not saying a word. The new recruits all fell back into formation, eyes on Kyle. He turned to look at Emily and shook his head. She had blood on her right arm that was dripping down to her elbow.

“You ok?” he asked.

“Manners… that’s what he needs,” she hissed, and walked past them. They watched as she tethered the Arabian to a post. He reared back and she dodged just as he tried to kick her.

“Oh that’s it!” she yelled, and flew past the guards into the small store room in the stable. She came out with a long metal stick.

Kyle frowned, he couldn’t imagine her having one, let alone using it. The training was unexpectedly halted as they all watched Emily. She stormed to the Arabian and stared him in the eyes.

“You want to mess with me?” she asked him, gritting her teeth.

The stallion reared back again, but dropped and whinnied loudly when Emily stuck the stick against his chest for a split second.

“Try again, Boy, I dare you,” she hissed.

The Arabian shied away from her, obviously not happy. She walked back to the new recruits a little calmer.

“Hold this,” she said, handing the stick to one of them and went into the storage room again.

She turned suddenly when she heard a loud thud, and saw the recruit lying flat on the ground. She walked over to him and knelt down, immediately breaking the no touching rule, and took his face in her hands.

“Are you ok?” she asked him.

He scrambled nervously to his feet, “Yes, Ma’am.”

“What happened?” she asked, picking the stick up off of the ground.

Emily turned when she heard Kyle laughing behind her, “Electricity, Emily… he wanted to know what the stick did.”

She turned, “The cattle prod dropped you?”

He nodded, embarrassed.

“This?” she asked, touching it to her leg. She didn’t even wince as she was shocked slightly.

He nodded again, even more embarrassed.

The recruit standing beside him was laughing hysterically. Emily walked to him and touched the cattle prod to his bare arm, then watched as he hit the ground.

“Hmmm,” she said, looking at him.

He got to his feet slowly, no longer laughing.

“I have to try this on Damon,” Emily said, running for the palace. She was lifted off the ground as Kyle wrapped an arm around her waist and picked her up, taking the cattle prod out of her hand.

He carried her back to the stable, “Let’s not.”

The recruits were watching, eyes wide. They knew the orders were that no heku was to touch the Elder's wife, yet Kyle not only touched her, but picked her up and took something from her.

Kyle set her down and put the cattle prod on a high ledge.

"Damon better hope I don't find him when I have that," she said, smiling sweetly, and then she turned to the recruits.

"Hello, I'm Emily," she said, and reached her hand out for the first in line. He looked at her, nervously, and then glanced at Kyle and nodded to Emily.

"Good to meet you, Ma'am."

Emily went to Frank, "Did you get the no touching lecture?"

He nodded and smiled.

"I'll bet you dinner, that half of you will break that rule by the time training is over," she said, putting her hands on her hips.

The recruits gasped and nervously stepped back.

"Not me!" she said, rolling her eyes. "I'll find you donors… geesh."

Kyle leaned against the stable shaking his head.

"Deal?" she asked Frank.

“Deal,” he said, grinning.

“Ok, first rule, never stand behind a horse,” she told them, pacing in front of them. “If you want me mad, the easiest way is to mistreat your horse, understood?”

They nodded.

“I will issue you each a horse based on your height. You will be responsible from here on out for taking care of it. That means brushing, feeding, and watering.” She went to the first recruit.

“You first, come on,” she said, reaching for a bridle. The bridle got stuck on the high nail and she jumped to free it, and then lost her balance when she landed. She felt a hand on her back, steadying her, and then a frightened gasp.

“That’s one,” she said, grinning, as she walked past Kyle and into the stables.

Emily spent the next few hours assigning horses. She went back to Kyle as they brushed their new charges and began the bonding.

“I’m up two,” she said, grinning.

“We try to get them to obey, and you just can’t stand that can you?” Kyle laughed.

“It’s a stupid rule. It’s not like they are grabbing my ass you know,” she said, leaning against the wall by him.

“You know why we have it,” he said, chuckling.

“Yes I do, and it’s stupid. Hey!” she yelled, walking over to the Arabian. He was chewing on the leather straps of his bridle.

She took the sides of his bridle and pulled him hard to face her, “What are you doing?”

The Arabian snorted right into her face, and she dropped the reins and stepped back, wiping her face off on her sleeve, “That’s disgusting.”

Kyle watched and grinned.

“Guess you get to stay there all night, how’s that?” she growled at him, and walked back to Kyle.

“That’s showing him, Em,” he said, laughing.

She grabbed a bale of hay, moved it to the side of the barn, and stood on it, then jumped and grabbed her cattle prod.

“Oh, no you don’t,” Kyle said, taking it from her again.

She glared at him and shouted, “Ok, bring your horses out front. Let me have a look.”

They lined up and Emily walked past them slowly. One of the horses was shying away from his heku. She stopped and watched.

“One thing I will mention,” Kyle said to them. “Emily has a bad habit of pushing the heku out of the way of a mad horse, and she usually gets kicked for it. Please try to control your horses, and don’t let her take the blow for you.”

The heku frowned. They couldn’t imagine letting the Elder’s wife take any kind of abuse in their stead.

“Ha-ha, very funny,” she said.

The horse she was watching began to stomp his feet anxiously, and pull at his reins. Emily approached him and took the reins from the heku guard just as the horse began to rear back. She moved between the guard and the horse as the stallion dropped and slammed his head into her chest, knocking her back onto the ground.

“Like that,” Kyle said, running to her.

Emily stood up and brushed herself off.

“I’m so sorry,” the heku said. “I didn’t see that coming.”

“Don’t worry about it,” she said, and took the reins. She led the horse a ways away from the others and talked to him calmly, while rubbing the soft velvet on his nose.

“I’m sorry,” the guard said to Kyle, who glared at him.

“Come here, Kyle,” Emily asked softly, and Kyle walked up. As soon as the horse saw him, it reared back again and kicked hard at Kyle, who dodged it easily.

“Go back,” she told him, and when Kyle returned to the stables, the horse calmed down.

“Hrm…” she sighed, leading the horse back into the stable. As she walked past the guards, the stallion shook his head and whinnied loudly. Emily came out a short time later with another horse and handed the reins to the guard.

“Try that one,” she said, and went back to Kyle.

“Last but not least, while you are in cavalry training, you will be paired up with one of our full cavalry guards. They will teach you the codes and rules,” he said, and finally stepped back.

“I’m hungry, let’s feed them and go eat,” she said, and then shrugged, “Or I’ll go eat.”

She pulled the cover off of the oats and took Patra in a fresh scoop, then filled her water trough with cold water. After checking to make sure all of the horses were fed and watered, she headed inside.

“I could use a steak,” she said, smiling to Kyle.

“I’m thinking I may go have dinner too,” he said, looking back over his shoulder.

“Did they find my Durango?” Emily asked.

“Yes, the police called about it, so we picked it up.”

Emily stopped at the front doors, “You sure I can’t have my cattle prod, just for an hour?”

“Yes I’m sure,” Kyle said, laughing as he walked away.

“You know I’ll find it,” she called to him, then went inside.

Emily went into the dining room and picked Allen up when he ran to her. She kissed him and brushed his black hair away from his face.

“You need a haircut,” she said, then smiled and sat him down at the table.

Emily was just sitting down when a heku arrived with steak and potato for her, and a small pizza for Allen. She cut into the juicy steak and started to eat, the training had made her hungry.

“Why do I always have to smell blood on you?” she heard Chevalier ask as he walked into the dining room.

“Because I’m accident prone,” she told him, and took a sip of wine.

She felt Chevalier kiss the top of her head, and watched as he did the same to Allen and then sat down, “How did it go?”

“Fine, you should have told me your Arabian came to torment me,” she said, taking another bite.

“You be nice to him.”

“Oh, he’s taken care of, believe me.”

“I like him, he has personality.”

“Did you know I can drop a heku to the ground with a cattle prod?” she asked, and took another bite.

“Emily… you didn’t,” Chevalier said, shaking his hand.

“Just one,” she told him and laughed.

“I didn’t know it would drop a heku, but I knew it would affect us somehow,” he chuckled.

“I wanted to try it out on Damon, but Kyle took it away,” she said, adding butter to the baked potato.

“You need to try to be nice to Damon.”

“When he drops the attitude, I’ll consider it.”

When they were done eating, Chevalier picked Allen up and took Emily’s hand, and they walked up to their room.

“Are you going to hold to your promise?” Emily asked when they stepped into the empty room.

He nodded, he was hoping she would forget.

Emily took Allen into the nursery and tucked him into bed, then came back out.

“Start with these ugly things,” she said, removing her long sleeved shirt. The camisole exposed the golden coiled snakes on her arms.

“Why are you bleeding?” he asked, as she wiped dried blood from her arm.

“That damned horse of yours. He and I had it out,” she said, and sat down. “Don’t change the subject. Why won’t they come off?”

Chevalier sighed and sat down, “They are a bonding tool.”

“What do you mean?” she asked, sitting down.

“It’s similar to the essence ring, but a lot harder to break.”

“But it can be broken, right?”

Chevalier grinned, “Yes it can. They can only be removed after death or infidelity.”

“Not disloyalty?”

“Nope, just infidelity or death.”

“Then why am I still wearing them?” she asked, confused.

“Doctor’s orders,” he said, taking her hand and kissing it softly. “It wasn’t my choice.”

“Then let’s get them off now,” she started pulling at them.

“How romantic… but no.”

“They irritate me.”

“Yes, me too. It’s not easy for me to see the mark of a bond on you, believe me. Two of them even, it only takes one to show that a person is taken,” he said, frowning.

“And the itchy stuff on my leg?” she asked.

Chevalier sighed, “That one’s more complicated.”

“Why won’t it come off?” she asked.

“That we don’t know. Those runes are normally tattoos. Yours are just ink, so we are still hopeful that they will come off.” He sat back in his chair.

“Runes? What do they mean?” she asked, her eyes narrowing.

“Back when the ancients were still in charge, and the mortals were becoming more civilized, the ancients found that some of the mortals were… well… attractive.”

Emily frowned, no longer sure she wanted to know about the runes.

“They didn’t want to bond with such lowly creatures,” Chevalier said with an apologetic smile, “But they also wanted to be able to… have the mortal.”

“Have them?”

Chevalier nodded, “Have… them…”

Emily’s eyes got wide, “They wanted them for sex?”

He nodded again and shut his eyes, “The mortal would become a slave to the heku, and they showed that possession with a rune.”

Emily’s voice cracked, “Am I marked as a sex slave?”

“Yes,” he said, softly, “Specifically belonging to the Encala. Because they picked a mate for you, we figure they only marked you as a humiliation though.”

“Get it off,” she said, panicked.

“Don’t worry, Em. The few of us that have seen it won’t tell, and we know it’s not valid,” he said, trying to calm her down.

“Burn it off,” she said, sticking a poker into the fire.

Chevalier removed it, “I’m not going to burn it off of you.”

“I should have killed them slower.”

“We’ll get it off.”

Emily leaned back and looked into the fire.

“Do you want to talk about the bag?” Chevalier asked. He had wanted to ask her about it.

“It’s him,” she whispered, bringing her knees up to her chest and wrapping her arms around them.

“I thought so.” He watched her closely.

“All of him and parts of the Council,” she said, and turned her face toward Chevalier.

He nodded, “What do you want to do with it?”

“I don’t know,” she said, softly.

He smiled, “You made it so they can’t revive the Encala Council. All of the ashes need to be there to perform the ritual.”

She nodded, “I hoped so.”

“That’s never been done before. Thousands of years and no one has ever taken part of the remains of a heku as a… well… trophy,” he said, and chuckled.

“Never?”

“Never, it’s considered incredibly rude. Only the Chief Enforcer has the power to ash a heku, and once that is done, the punishment has been dealt. There is no reason for further retribution.”

“What if I don’t care that it was rude?” she asked.

He grinned, “Then keep your bag.”

Emily turned back to the fire.

“The Valle think you have given us your ability to ash,” he said, amused.

“Why?”

“Winchesters were heavily studied. Historically, they could only kill 10, maybe 15,” he said, watching her.

“I don’t know how many I killed,” she shrugged.

“Just over 1,800,” he said, and immediately wondered if he should have told her.

“1,800?”

He nodded.

“So this mere mortal couldn’t have done that… I must have bestowed my gifts on the Equites?”

“Exactly,” he said, smiling. “We didn’t feel like starting a mass panic, so we went along with it.”

“I won’t do it again,” she told him.

“I hope not. There for a while we weren’t sure you would survive.”

“I’m tougher than I look,” she said, smiling slightly.

“I’m aware of that.” He knelt by her chair and kissed her.

Chapter 11 - Deal

“I won!” Emily said, doing a small victory dance.

Kyle shook his head, “Had to do it, didn’t you?” he asked the fearful heku.

“I’m sorry, it was so fast,” he tried to explain.

Emily smiled and went to Frank, “You can pick two guards… we’ll go to dinner tonight.”

He grinned and nodded, “A deal’s a deal.”

Kyle was irritated that Frank seemed pleased at the outcome of the bet. He made sure to keep an extra close eye on the heku. He also wasn't sure how the Elder was going to react to the prize in the bet. Chevalier was a lot better at hiding his jealousy lately, but this was pushing even his control.

"Put the horses up. I'll meet you three at the Durango in an hour," she said, and ran into the palace to get ready.

Emily took a hot shower, excited at the thought she was going to go out and have some fun. The palace was dull at times, and she missed going out on the town. She dressed casually in a blue halter top and jeans. She hoped the coiled snakes weren't too outlandish for mortals, but it was getting too warm to wear long sleeves. She ran a brush through her hair and went to the bedroom to find her shoes.

"Going out?" Chevalier asked from the edge of the bed.

"Yes, I won a bet, so I get to go out to dinner," she said, looking around.

"Oh?"

Emily was impressed, as he wasn't yelling yet.

"It's just dinner, a fun bet with Frank," she said, slipping on her cowboy boots.

“What was the bet?”

Emily went to the bed and sat on Chevalier’s lap with her knees at his sides, so she could face him. She kissed him softly.

“Honestly, do you really want to know?” she asked.

“When you say it like that, I wonder if it’s best if I don’t know,” he said, wrapping his arms around her waist.

She smiled, “I thought so.”

Chevalier fell back against the bed, pulling her with him and looked up into her eyes. She leaned down and kissed his neck, lightly running her lips across his jaw and pressing them against his.

“Have fun,” he said, smiling up at her.

“We have time,” she said, kissing him again.

He pushed her gently away from him, “Go to dinner, Em.”

She rolled off of him and grabbed her purse.

Chevalier watched as she walked out of the bedroom. He laid back on the bed, seething. He growled, jealously, and slammed his fists against the bed. He debated trailing them secretly, and then was able to pull the jealousy back and he opted to take Allen to the game room instead.

Emily saw Frank and two other heku waiting by her Durango. She was pleased to see them in jeans and t-shirts. She crawled in and started up the car when everyone was ready.

“Where shall we go?” she asked, smiling.

Frank was grinning broadly from the seat by her, “As you are the only one eating, I say ladies choice.”

Emily turned to the two in the backseat, “Do you two talk?”

“Yes we do.”

“Yup, Ma’am.”

“What are your names?”

“I’m Silas, and this is Nelson.”

She nodded, “Nice to get a name finally. I don’t think Kyle likes us to get too close during training, so most of the time I don’t really know names.”

The three of them nodded in agreement.

“Do you dance?” she smiled.

All three of the heku nodded again, and Emily pulled the Durango out of the garage. She turned up the Toby Keith CD and sat back to enjoy the

ride. The heku visited about people she didn't know, but then turned to their horses, in which she was much more interested. Not long after dark, they pulled up to a small bar that promised the best steak in town. Emily cut the engine, and they all looked to the doors as someone was pushed out. He landed against the cement, stood up, and walked away.

"Ready?" Emily asked, smiling.

She was glad to see the heku were anxious to be out of the palace, too. The bar was noisy and overcrowded, but the four found a table finally. The table was sticky and stained with bottle rings. Emily ordered a medium-well steak and fries, while the heku each ordered a shot of Jack Daniels and a beer. Emily grinned and ordered a shot for herself.

Emily frowned, "You drink?"

Frank laughed, "You mean more than blood?"

Emily nodded, it was hard to hear over the noise from the dance floor.

"We can," said one of the other heku. "We just aren't supposed to."

The drinks were delivered first. Emily held her shot glass up, "Here's to following orders."

She grinned as the others toasted and they all downed their shots quickly.

“Another round,” Frank said to the waitress.

“I can’t drink much. I have to drive,” she said.

“I can drive us home,” Frank told her.

“Not if you’re drunk you don’t.”

“We don’t get drunk,” he said, laughing.

She frowned, “Then why drink?”

“The taste, it’s second only to blood,” Silas said.

“Then why is it banned?” Emily yelled over the music.

Silas looked at Nelson, “Well...”

“What?”

“Nothing to worry about, we’re fine,” Nelson said, smiling, and he downed his second shot.

Emily nodded and downed her second shot, and then cut into the steak. They talked about nothing of importance while she ate. She quit counting the number of shots the guards did, but she stopped herself at three.

“Oh!” Emily said when the music changed. “I love this song!”

Emily scooted out of the booth and ran to the dance floor. She joined the line dance as it started, and laughed when she saw the three heku also join. She was surprised to see they knew the dance and were actually good at it. When the line dance ended, the band started a slow song.

“Shall we?” Frank asked, putting his hand out.

“Well, we’re breaking all of the rules anyway,” Emily said, and took his hand. He twirled her expertly around the dance floor, leading with a strong hand to the small of her back.

“You’re a good dancer, I’m impressed,” Emily said, laughing.

“You sound surprised,” Frank said, and grinned.

After the dance, they went back to the booth. Silas and Nelson were downing yet another shot. She slid into the booth and ordered a coke.

“Excuse me, Ma’am,” a local cowboy said. “Would you like to dance?”

“No thank you, I have a jealous husband,” she explained, and then smiled.

The cowboy looked at the three large men sitting beside her and nodded.

“Are you sure you’re not going to get sick or something?” Emily asked when the guards ordered another round of shots.

“We’re just getting started,” Silas said, grinning.

“Hey, pretty thing.” Another local came up. This one smelled like old alcohol and cheap cologne, “Ditch these losers and come dance with me.”

“No, thank you,” she said, smiling at him.

“I said come dance with me,” he took her hand, but she pulled it away from him.

“No,” she said, again.

“The Lady said no,” Silas said, glaring at the man. He finally stumbled off.

“You didn’t tell me, what affect does alcohol have? It has to be bad to have been banned,” she asked, sipping her coke.

“The Elders believe it tends to make us violent, but I disagree,” Nelson said.

Emily laughed, “Aren’t you violent anyway?”

“That we are!” The three toasted and drank another shot.

“I’ll be right back,” Emily said, and left for the ladies room.

On her way back to the booth, Emily was pushed back against the wall and felt hands at her waist. It was the cologne covered local, “I said, I want to dance.”

“… and the bear sat down with his friends,” Chevalier said, and turned the page of Allen’s book. “Good night friends, he said.”

Chevalier looked down at Allen, and he was fast asleep. He kissed him lightly on the forehead and walked out of his room and then heard Kyle call him into the hallway.

“Try to not be upset, ok?” Kyle asked, turning to him.

Chevalier sighed, “I hate when you start a conversation like that.”

Kyle smiled sympathetically, “The police department called.”

“And?” Chevalier asked, frowning.

“Bail has been set for Emily, Silas, Frank, and Nelson at $1,000 each,” Kyle winced.

“They are in jail?” Chevalier hissed.

“Apparently.”

“What for?”

“Bar fight,” Kyle said, and took a step back.

“Why did they call you?” Chevalier asked, and then frowned.

“Because they don’t want you to know, but I’m not that brave,” Kyle said, grinning slightly.

“Go get her Durango. I’ll go bail at least one of them out,” he scowled, and walked down the stairs slowly.

Chevalier drove to the police department and sat outside, calming himself. He took a deep breath and walked into the red brick building.

“May I help you?” a policeman at the front desk asked.

“I’m here to bail out my wife,” Chevalier said, pulling out his wallet.

“Name?”

“Emily Russo.”

“Here we go…” The officer read through the papers. “What about her three companions?”

“Yeah, I guess them too.” Chevalier decided he could punish them much worse than a night in jail could.

“That’ll be four thousand dollars bail,” the officer said, and took Chevalier’s credit card.

“Bar fight was it?” Chevalier asked.

“Yes, Sir,” the officer confirmed.

“Then why was Emily arrested?” he questioned further.

“The little gal? She was right in the middle of it,” the officer said, handing Chevalier a bag. “Here are their things.”

Chevalier followed him back into the holding cells. The officer left as Chevalier looked into the cell. Emily was in a cell alone, and the three heku were in one together.

“This is becoming too common, Emily,” Chevalier said, looking at her.

She stood up, not quite sure what to say.

“Should we just start reserving a cell for you?”

“Where’s Kyle?” she asked, sitting on the hard bed.

“Whose blood is on your shirt?” he asked.

Emily shrugged, “I don’t know. It’s not mine though… I called for Kyle.”

“He’s getting your Durango from the bar. A fight, seriously?” Chevalier asked into the cell with the guards.

They were standing at attention and Silas finally spoke, “Sorry, Sir. It was… unavoidable.”

“We’ll see about that… come on, let’s get out of here,” Chevalier said. He growled when he smelled alcohol on all four of them.

“In the front,” Chevalier hissed, when Emily tried to crawl into the backseat with the guards. She swallowed hard and moved to the front seat.

Chevalier put the Humvee into drive and drove out toward the palace.

It was quiet for a few, tense moments.

“There better be a good explanation,” Chevalier said.

“There is, Sir,” Frank said. “We were just having some fun and…”

“Drinking,” he snapped.

Frank sighed, “Yes, drinking. This mortal came and wanted to dance with Emily, and she said no, but he grabbed her hand.”

Chevalier’s hands tightened on the steering wheel. Emily sat, quiet and still, and watched out the window.

“She pulled it back and the guy left, we thought it was over,” Frank continued. “Then when she was coming back from the ladies room, he pinned her against the wall. We had to do something about that.”

“How did you end up in jail then?” he asked, glancing at her.

She sighed, “It was five on three, and it didn’t seem fair so… well...”

“So she jumped on the back of the guy hitting me from behind,” Silas said, trying not to grin.

“Emily…” Chevalier growled.

“How fair is that? Five on three, and that guy was just hitting Silas while he was fighting with another guy,” Emily said, frowning.

“Five on three is not a fair fight, you are right,” Chevalier said. “Three heku guards should be able to take out close to thirty mortals at once.”

“We didn’t know she joined in, honest, until the bouncer pulled her off of the guy’s back,” Nelson said.

“Well I saw the bouncer touch Emily and then…” Frank sighed, “I had to take care of him, too.”

“I see,” Chevalier said.

“How mad are you?” Emily asked him.

“Are you injured?” he asked her, still watching the road.

“No”

“Not at all?”

“No,” she said, watching him.

“I’m pretty mad,” he said, turning into the city’s gates. He was waved in by the front guards.

He pulled over at the guard’s barracks, “Report to Kyle first thing in the morning.”

The three nodded and stepped out.

“How drunk are you?” Chevalier asked, pulling back onto the road.

“I’m not drunk,” she answered, irritated.

“I smell alcohol,” he said.

“I didn’t say I didn’t drink… but I’m not drunk,” she said, watching out the window, “And I don’t appreciate the feeling that I’m about to get grounded or sent to the principal’s office.”

“How much did the guards drink?” He ignored her comment.

“I’m not their mother, I don’t know,” she said. She knew he’d be mad if he knew how much those three had put down.

“How much did you drink?” he asked, pulling into the garage.

“I don’t know, Daddy,” she scowled at him. She looked over and saw her Durango parked in its spot.

She pulled the keys from her purse and walked toward the Durango. Chevalier appeared between her and the door before she could get the key ready.

“Where are you going?” he asked, sternly.

“I’m going to get the other three, and we’re staying in a hotel tonight,” she said, trying to push him out of the way. She growled in frustration when he didn’t budge.

“No”

“No?”

“That’s right… No.” He crossed his arms.

“You can’t tell me no. I’m not one of your stooges.”

“I can tell you ‘no’ because you’ve been drinking, and I don’t want you driving,” he said, pulling the keys out of her hand.

“Do you want a fight? Is that it? We haven’t fought in a while, so you’re picking one now?” she asked, moving toe-to-toe with him.

“You two just calm down,” Kyle said, walking up to them.

Emily spun and slapped him before he could react, “I told you not to tell him.”

“Yeah and I’m more afraid of him than I am of you,” Kyle said, shrugging. “How drunk are you?”

“None… of… your… business,” she said, pushing him with each word.

“You should ask how drunk your guards are,” Chevalier said, stepping toward them.

“My… my guards… they were drinking?” Kyle asked, shocked.

Chevalier nodded, “Yes, and when they picked a fight, Emily joined in because it was five on three… and that wasn’t fair.”

“They didn’t pick the fight! Those mortals did,” Emily corrected, furiously.

“I told them to report to you in the morning,” Chevalier told him.

“To hell with that! I’m going to get them tonight,” Kyle said, heading for the door.

He stopped when he felt a hand on his arm, “Leave them alone.”

“This is none of your concern,” he told her, and pulled his arm away from her grasp.

“It is because this is my fault. I picked the bar instead of a restaurant. I’m the one that got pushed around by some mortal. They did nothing wrong,” she said, angrily.

“They drank. I don’t care about the bar fight, though I am concerned that you felt the need to jump into it,” Kyle said, stepping toward her.

“I told them to drink. It was an order,” she said, crossing her arms.

“Oh really?”

“Yes”

“Well the order not to drink came from the Elders, and that’s higher up than you are,” he blurred from the garage.

“Come on, Em, upstairs,” Chevalier said, taking her arm.

She tried to pull away, but his grasp was too tight.

“Stop it, right now,” she said.

He turned to her.

“You have no right to treat me like this. I can go out drinking every night if I want. I can get sloshed off my ass and dance until my feet bleed. You can’t do anything about it!” she yelled.

“Fine,” he roared, and blurred into the palace.

She walked in, scowling, and went up to her room. She pulled on an old t-shirt and went to bed.

Emily woke up when Sam took Allen down for breakfast. Her head hurt a little, so she took a few aspirin, and got dressed quickly. Today was the day off of cavalry training, but she still wanted to see the three heku from last night. She threw her hair into a high pony, and ran out of the palace and into the stable.

She slipped a bridle on Patra, and jumped up onto her, bareback, kicking her into a gallop. She had to stop and ask directions twice, but finally saw the barracks. She slid off of the mare and tied her to a post, then stood outside of the barracks. She wondered if she was allowed inside, and then shrugged and opened the door.

All eyes turned to Emily when she entered. She looked around with wide eyes. The entire barracks was one large room. There were no beds, just chairs with stacks of books and armor in various stages of repair.

“What do you want?” a guard asked her, irritated.

“I’m looking for Frank,” she said, feeling uneasy at the way he looked at her, loathingly.

“He’s not here.”

“Where is he?”

“None of your business,” he hissed.

Emily advanced on him, “Do you have a problem with me?”

He turned and faced her, “Yes, I do.”

Emily stopped right in front of him, and she felt the guards surround the two of them. She saw out of the corner of her eye that the path to the doorway was now filled with angry looking heku.

“Then get it out… come on…” she said, pushing him with both hands.

“Yeah, like I’m going to talk bad to the wifey of an Elder. Do I look stupid to you?” he asked, high-fiving another guard.

“I don’t see him around now, have at it,” she said, scowling.

“So you can turn me to ash? No way, Tiny,” he said, grinning down at her.

“I don’t have to turn you to ash to kick your ass,” she said, balling her hands into fists.

The heku laughed at her, “Pretty scary for a mortal.”

Emily ran up to him and drew her hand back, but someone grabbed her wrist as she was about to punch him.

She turned angrily, and then screamed when Mark threw her over his shoulder, “I’m calling general quarters,” he yelled at the guards.

They grumbled and blurred, disappearing to somewhere Emily couldn’t see.

“Put me down,” she ordered.

“No,” Mark said, walking out of the barracks.

It infuriated her when he got onto Patra, still holding her over his shoulder. He hoisted her off of his shoulder and laid her across the mare, then kicked her into a gallop.

She struggled to get up, but his strong hands held her down, “Let me up.”

“No,” he said, maneuvering through the city streets toward the palace.

“I’ll ash you,” she screamed.

“No you won’t.”

Kyle watched as they approached the stables and his eyes grew angry, “What do you think you’re doing, Mark?”

Kyle helped Emily down, and Mark jumped off of the mare, “Saving her life.”

Kyle frowned, “How so?”

“She was in the barracks… picked a fight with Kenneth,” Mark said, taking Patra back to her stall.

“Is that his name? He’s a…” Emily began, but Kyle cut her off.

“In the barracks?” he asked her, shocked.

“Yeah”

“You shouldn’t be in the barracks, Emily,” he said, sternly.

Emily turned on her heels and headed into the palace mumbling, “Don’t do this, Emily. Don’t do that, Emily. Kiss my what, Emily?”

Kyle stifled a grin and turned back to Mark, “Was she actually inside the building?”

“Yes, she was looking for Frank,” Mark said, coming back out of the stable.

“She could have been killed,” Kyle sighed.

“I know. That’s why I took extra precautions to get her back here safely,” Mark said, watching him.

Kyle nodded, “Thank you, and get Kenneth into my office.”

Mark nodded and blurred away. Kyle went inside and knocked on Chevalier’s office door.

“Enter,” he said.

Kyle stepped in and sat down, “For someone that can’t get one, I’m sure starting to get a headache.”

Chevalier chuckled, “The guards acting up this morning?”

“Guards? No… your wife though…”

Chevalier sighed, “What did she do now?”

“She decided to go into the barracks.”

“Wait… inside?”

“Yup, then she picked a fight with Kenneth,” Kyle sighed.

“I swear, I’ll kill her myself,” Chevalier said, angrily, and blurred from his office. He felt Kyle follow him up the stairs to his room. He slammed open the door and looked around, but the room was empty.

“What did you do with her?” he asked Kyle.

“Nothing, she stormed away from the stables and into the palace,” Kyle said, looking around.

“Sir!”

Chevalier spun when the guard yelled from the door, “What?”

“Lady Emily, she’s locked herself in a cell,” the guard said, frantically.

“Let her out and bring her up here,” Chevalier hissed.

“We… well… we can’t, Sir.”

“Why not?” Kyle asked.

“She has the only keys and won’t give them back,” the guard said, looking at the floor.

“She’s a mortal!” Chevalier yelled. “How did she get the only keys away from you?”

“She… threatened us, Sir,” the guard said, embarrassed.

“Leave her there then. If she wants to be in jail so badly, we’ll see how she likes living alone for a few hours,” Chevalier said, throwing a vase hard against the wall.

“She’s not alone,” the guard whispered.

“What?” Chevalier turned, angrily.

“She’s in with Frank, Silas, and Nelson. They are trying to get her to give the keys back, too, but she’s dropped them down her shirt and so...” the guard stopped when Chevalier blurred from the room, followed by Kyle.

“Emily get out of there,” Chevalier growled into the cell. The three guards stood immediately at attention.

“I can’t, we have five years left on our sentence,” she said, sitting on the bed.

“Frank… get the key,” Chevalier said, watching as Emily’s eyes grew wide. She spun and curled up into a tight ball, face down on the bed.

“Sir?” Frank asked, nervously.

“Get the keys from her.”

“Sir, they are in her shirt,” Frank stammered.

“Do it,” Chevalier said, scowling.

Frank reached down and put his hands on Emily’s waist and picked her up. She didn’t change positions at all from the small ball.

“No!” she screamed at him.

Frank glanced at Chevalier and then sunk his hand into Emily's shirt, cringing as she bit his arm. He pulled his arm out quickly, and handed the blood covered key to Kyle. He opened the door and Chevalier hauled Emily out of the cell by her arm. He re-locked the cell and shoved the key back into the hands of the guard.

"Try to keep it this time," he hissed, and blurred after Chevalier and Emily.

"Let me go," Emily said, coldly.

"Elder… stay calm," Kyle said when he caught up with them at the bedroom door.

"Oh, I am calm," Chevalier said, and slammed the door in Kyle's face.

"What happened to my freedom?" Emily asked when he turned around, her arms were crossed at her chest.

"Freedom to die? Is that what you want?"

"How is visiting the barracks looking to die?"

"The heku guards in the palace, the ones on the Cavalry, have a very high tolerance for mortals. They respect my decision to take you as my wife, but that's not the view of all of the guards. Those are left in the barracks to patrol the city, far away from you," he growled. "Now I have

to go punish Kenneth for even talking to you. It's forbidden without a station on the Cavalry or in the palace."

"You told me I was accepted," she scowled.

"If I killed every guard who doesn't approve of you, we'd have only about 1/8 of our guards left," he said, realizing he hadn't told her.

"I don't care what you do to Kenneth, but the three from last night don't deserve five years in a cell."

"They drank, it is against the rules."

"Five years for drinking? They'll be miserable down there without being able to feed," she said, sitting down on the bed.

"I thought we agreed that you would leave the rule breakers to me."

"I thought we agreed that I have the freedom to do what I want and when I want."

"Your freedom does not extend to the heku you are standing by."

"Let them go."

"I'm not in the mood to fight with you," he said, forcing his temper back under control.

Emily screamed, angrily, and walked into the bathroom, slamming the door and locking it behind her. Chevalier heard a session of the Council called and blurred from the room.

He was the last to sit at his chair, and he spun to face the front. He raised an eyebrow when he saw four Encala standing before them.

“The Encala come to us with a request. You know, Chief Enforcer to Chief Enforcer,” Damon said, watching the four from the opposing faction.

“What exactly is your request?” Leonid asked them.

“There were two items taken that we are requesting be returned. Let’s start with the remains of our Elders,” he said, glaring at the Council.

“They are not ours to return,” Maleth said, watching them.

“Who do we ask then? Only the Equites were in the palace that day,” the leader asked.

“Oh, they are being kept by a member of the Equites, just not one of the Council,” Maleth explained.

“Can the Council not control its people enough to demand their return?”

“We have full control of our people, I assure you,” Damon scowled.

“What is the second item you ask returned?” Leonid asked him.

The door behind the Council opened and they spun their chairs to see who would intrude on a session. Emily came in, supported by Kyle. She was pale and grasping at her thigh.

“It burns,” she moaned.

“Ahh... that would be it,” the Encala said, amused.

It took both Damon and Maleth to hold Chevalier in his chair. He growled at the Encala leader.

“We demand you release her, immediately,” Leonid yelled at him.

They let Chevalier go when he tried to get to Emily. He knelt down by her.

“She said it started burning a few minutes ago,” Kyle whispered.

Chevalier nodded, “We’ll make it go away, Em.”

“It burns,” she said, as her shaking hands clawed at her jeans.

“I will not release her. She was promised to me by an ancient, one who outranks your entire faction. She is mine by primordial right,” he said smugly.

“We will not abide by the conditions set forth by an ancient. One that was supposed to have been banished for eternity,” Maleth told him.

“Come, Emily, it is time to go,” the Encala said, and grinned when she screamed.

Emily’s entire leg felt like it was on fire. She clawed at her jeans with her fingernails, trying to tear them off of her burning thigh.

“I suggest you stop torturing her this instant,” Leonid growled. “You are outnumbered, and I have no qualms about watching you die.”

Emily stopped screaming and leaned back against the floor, panting.

“She’s mine and you know it, by order of the Ancient. I can control her and do with her as I wish,” he said, smiling.

“Control her?” Damon asked, standing up. “Where was this control when she decided to slaughter half of your city?”

“I didn’t have time to tell her to stop. Had I done so, this wouldn’t be an issue right now,” he said, raising an eyebrow.

“So you can control her?”

“Yes”

“I’d like to see that,” Damon said, sitting down. He glanced at Chevalier, who glared at him icily.

“Come to me, Emily,” Vaughn said, softly.

Emily got to her feet and looked down on Vaughn. She descended the steps slowly as the Equites Council watched. She walked over and stood, facing him.

“Good, Child. She knows her place and obeys as promised,” Vaughn said, smiling at the Council.

Vaughn spun suddenly when the three Encala with him fell to the ground as ash, “Don’t call me child.”

The Equites Council all relaxed and looked at one another grinning.

“You will obey me,” Vaughn said, looking into her eyes.

“Take this thing off of my leg,” she hissed at him.

“Obey me,” he said, sterner, concentrating hard on her green eyes.

Vaughn fell to his knees and screamed, clutching his chest. The muscles in his body flexed with the pain, and he fell to the ground.

“Emily,” she heard Chevalier say softly from behind her. She turned to him and released Vaughn from the pain.

“Let us handle this, please,” Maleth said to her. She wiped the blood from her nose and walked back up the stairs. The council member to Chevalier’s left stood and let Emily take his chair.

Vaughn struggled and got to his feet, “I will release her if you will return the Elder to me.”

“Just the Elder?” Leonid asked.

“Yes, you can keep the Ancient, but we need the other Elder,” Vaughn’s voice was strained.

Leonid turned to Emily, “They are in your possession. Do you wish to return the Encala’s Elders?”

“That would be kind of hard,” she said, looking at Vaughn.

“Why is that, Dear?” Leonid asked.

“I mixed them all up together and…” she said, and frowned when she heard gasps from around her. She looked at the council members, and they were half amused, and half astonished that she would do such a thing. Only Chevalier was grinning.

“That’s despicable! Never have I heard of such disgusting behavior,” Vaughn yelled at her.

“She’s a mortal. She knew no better,” Maleth said. “Do go on.”

“Well I’m not going to tell if you all are going to treat me like I did something wrong,” she said, and frowned.

“We will not… you… you just caught us off guard. We’ve never heard of such a thing,” Maleth explained, and smiled softly at her.

Emily pulled a chain from around her neck and dangled the locket from it, “This is all I have left of the ashes.”

Chevalier had to turn his chair away from Vaughn to hide his laughter. Kyle chuckled at Chevalier.

“Where is my Elder?” Vaughn asked her, angrily.

“Well…” she looked at Maleth, questioningly.

“Where is he?” he asked her.

“I dumped some in the river,” she began, and ignored the stifled laughs from the Council, and the angry hiss from Vaughn, “and the rest I... well… kind of… dumped… somewhere over New Jersey.”

“You did what?” Vaughn gasped, and his rage permeated the room.

Maleth tried to control himself, “Emily, is that really what…” He turned his chair away from the Encala when he couldn’t stop laughing.

Damon growled and jumped, landing against Vaughn mid-air as he lunged at Emily. They crashed to the ground with a loud thud and began to fight, their movements nothing but a blur to Emily's eyes. Two more council members jumped the table, and the Encala was soon restrained against the back wall.

"Put him in prison until he learns some control," Damon ordered the four guards that were summoned. They took him, fighting, out of the room.

"Dear, did you really do as you said?" Leonid asked her.

She nodded, "I'm sorry if I caused you more trouble."

"No trouble, Dear, none at all," Maleth said, smiling at her.

"Your mortal thoughts and actions just… well… astonish us at times," Leonid explained.

"That means I'm not getting rid of this rune then," she said, looking into the eyes of the council members.

"If you had some shred of restraint, we would have a bargaining chip with which to have it removed," Damon said, coldly.

"Kyle… get me my cattle prod," Emily said, standing up.

"Don't threaten me."

“I don’t threaten, Sweetheart. I do.”

“I’m not afraid of a mortal.”

“Bite me!” she growled.

“Don’t tempt me,” he said, maliciously.

“You couldn’t handle it.”

“Is that an offer?”

“You’re non gradus anus rodentum,” she said, grinning.

“Both of you sit down!” Leonid ordered. Both Damon and Emily sat down quickly, his voice demanded immediate results.

“Is there some kind of problem between you two?” Maleth asked them, frowning disapprovingly.

“She needs to learn some respect and obedience,” Damon said, calmly.

“He needs to learn how to die,” Emily said, watching him.

“Enough!” Maleth said, angrily.

“Damon, don’t you have something you should be doing?” Leonid asked, and Damon blurred from the room.

“Elder, why don’t you escort your wife back to her quarters,” Leonid said, to Chevalier.

He stood up and reached a hand out to her, “Come on, Troublemaker.”

She took his hand and followed him up the stairs.

“You told a heku to bite you?” Kyle asked from behind them, chuckling.

“It’s just a phrase,” Emily told him, as they got to the door of the bedroom.

“Yes, but someone may take you up on it,” Chevalier said, ushering her inside and shutting the door.

“Ok, let me have it,” Emily said, pulling off her boots and sitting on the chair by the fireplace.

“Have what?” Chevalier asked, watching her.

“Isn’t that why I’m confined to quarters? Time for me to get yelled at for calling Damon an idiot?” she asked.

“You didn’t call him an idiot,” Chevalier said, trying not to smile.

“Oh… well I should have,” she sighed, and turned back to the fire.

Chevalier picked Emily up, sat in the chair, and then sat her down on his lap. He wrapped his arms around her and looked into the fire, “What exactly is it about him that you don’t like?”

“He’s pompous.”

“Ok”

“Arrogant, selfish, egotistical, conceited, rude, impolite, crotchety, and I think he might be in the middle of a homosexual panic,” she said, leaning her head back against Chevalier.

“Oh is that all?” he chuckled.

“You better watch out. He might think I’m competition for your affection,” she said, running her fingers along the muscles in his forearms.

Chevalier chuckled, “Heku aren’t homosexuals.”

“None of them?” she asked. She had some very close gay friends back in Montana.

“None.” He held her tightly.

“So it would offend a heku to call them such?” she asked.

“Yes, very much so,” Chevalier said.

“Hey Damon!” Emily yelled, and then felt Chevalier’s hand over her mouth.

“He’s trying to get the rune off of your leg. Would you please leave him alone?” he asked, and removed his hand.

“I bet I could get it removed,” she said.

“Yes I’m sure you could, but it is his job.”

Emily turned and sat facing Chevalier on his lap, “And the arm bands?”

He smiled, “That’s my job.”

Emily threw her arms around him and kissed him so passionately, that the chair they were sitting in fell backwards and crashed them to the floor. Chevalier cushioned her fall and didn’t even have time to ask if she was ok before she pressed her lips to his again.

Chevalier kissed her shoulder and looked over at the roaring fire. They were curled up on the rug in front of the fireplace, with a thin sheet covering them. He took her wrist and pulled it up from her body, slipping the arm band off of her. She pulled the other one off.

“Finally,” she said, tossing it into the fire.

Chevalier chuckled, “It won’t burn.”

Emily took the other band and rolled over onto her back. She held it up to the firelight to look at it, “It seems so harmless.”

“Funny, how the most harmless looking things, can be the most dangerous,” he said, and kissed her lightly.

She looked over at him, “You’re not referring to me, right?”

He raised an eyebrow, “Of course not.”

“How do you say ‘I love you’ in Latin?” she asked him.

“Te amo,” he answered.

“How is it you all speak Latin?” she questioned, propping up on her elbow to face him.

“It is our native language. We taught it to the mortals, though they’ve tweaked their version a bit.”

“Oh”

“Where did you learn your fun little Latin phrase?” He brushed some hair from her face.

She smiled, “I asked David, a long time ago.”

“Do you know more?”

“Sure… how about… Magister mundi sum!” she grinned, throwing her fist up into the air.

“Anything other than odd sayings and mean names?” he laughed.

“No, that’s about all.”

“Tell me the truth. Did you throw the Encala out over New Jersey?”

“Not all of them. Some I dumped in the river,” she said, wondering if he was mad. He answered her concern with a kiss.

Chapter 12 - Mortals

Emily spun the roulette wheel, “Call’em.”

“One,” Allen said, watching the small ball spin in the wheel.

“Red,” Mark said, and sat chips down on the felt table.

The other heku thought and put chips down, “Two through twenty.”

The heku on the end thought for a moment and then put some chips down, “Black.”

“Are you sure this is how this game is played?” Mark asked Emily.

“Nope, not at all. I don’t gamble.” She grinned and watched the wheel slowly stop. The ball landed on a black zero.

Everyone pushed their chips across the table. Emily stole one and ate it, then went back to the wheel.

“You aren’t supposed to eat the chips,” Mark chuckled.

“Fine, you can each have one too,” she said, taking another potato chip.

“Pass”

Emily frowned, “That reminds me… Kyle lost a bet and owes me a pedicure.”

“I thought you didn’t gamble,” Mark said, placing more of his chips on the table.

“Oh, it wasn’t a gamble, it was a sure thing,” Emily spun the wheel and let the ball go. “Call’em.”

“One,” Allen said, grinning.

Mark got a faraway look in his eyes and then stood up, “We have to go.”

“Why?” Emily asked, but the heku had already blurred away.

“Where’d they go?” Allen asked her.

She shrugged, “I have no idea. Want to watch a movie?”

“Popcorn, too?”

“Sure, popcorn too. Go get settled and I’ll make it,” she said, turning to the microwave. It had taken a few weeks to talk them into putting a microwave in their game room. The heku complained about the awful smell of popcorn, but now it was installed into the wall and stacked with popcorn.

“What movie?” Emily asked, going over the DVDs.

“Lost Boys!”

Emily turned to him, “You’re 4, you can’t watch the Lost Boys.”

“I do,” he told her.

“Who lets you watch it?”

“Daddy”

“Of course… what else do you want to watch?”

“Pete’s Dragon,” he said, pouting.

Emily put in the movie and got the popcorn out of the microwave. She curled up by Allen to watch.

Emily looked toward the wall when she heard soft whispers.

“Did you hear that?” she asked Allen.

He nodded, looking at the same wall.

Emily finished her handful of popcorn and walked over to the wall. She stood back and looked at it, listening to the soft whispers. The wall was the one used for darts. It had several targets attached to it and a wooden rack full of darts.

Emily leaned closer and pressed her ear against the wall. She screamed when fell forward, landing on her hands and knees on a dusty, dirt floor. She coughed a few times, her landing stirred up some of the dust. Standing up, she brushed herself off and looked around, but it was too dark to see anything.

“Hello?” she yelled, and jumped slightly when several torches lit around the room.

Now that she could see, she looked around at the four walls. The room wasn’t large, smaller than her closet even. The stone walls were lined with runes, and covered in cobwebs.

“Heku and their damned runes,” she said, and went back to the wall through which she had come. She put her hands out and touched it. It was a solid rock wall. She felt along the four walls, but they were all solid.

“Great, Em, explain that one. ‘Well you see… I walked through a wall in the game room, and couldn’t get out’,” she sighed.

“Allen?” she yelled, then listened at the wall. She didn’t hear an answer.

“Gah,” Emily growled, and looked around. She noticed a small recession in the middle of the floor. She knelt down and brushed the dust off, it was covering a wooden plank. She tried to pry it open with her fingers, but it didn’t budge.

Sighing, she stood up and looked around the room again, trying to see if there was any way out. She felt hands against her back push her onto the wooden plank, and it gave way under her feet. Emily fell 10 feet and landed with a loud crash. She felt around in the darkness and drew her hand back quickly when she felt a skull. She got to her feet, and fought to see with the little light that was coming from the splintered wooden plank above.

Emily looked up and saw the wooden plank repairing, and soon she was in total darkness.

“Hello?” she yelled, and again torches lit simultaneously around the room.

Emily gasped and spun quickly. The octagon room’s dirt floor was covered with human bones and full skeletons hung from shackles on the walls. There was one passageway, but the entrance was entirely obscured with thick cobwebs. She could see the vapor from her breath as she carefully looked around the cold room.

Walking slowly toward one of the skeletons, Emily reached her hand out. Just before she touched it, the head rose slightly toward her. She screamed and ran for the passageway, covering her face defensively when she broke through the cobwebs.

“Did you hear that?” Chevalier asked, cocking his head to the side slightly.

“What?” Kyle asked, looking up from his roster.

“I just heard Emily scream, but it was… different.”

“I didn’t hear her,” Kyle frowned.

“She’s probably in some dire need of heku assistance,” Damon said, and pointed out a name on Kyle’s roster.

“Would you be nice?” Chevalier said to Damon.

“Yes, Sir,” Damon said, holding back his irritation.

“She can’t be in too much trouble. We just barely left she and Allen in the game room,” Mark said, concerned.

“I’m sure it’s nothing,” Chevalier turned back to the roster.

“We could just leave it at four,” Damon looked up at them.

“The full seven gave us even numbers on shifts though,” Kyle told him.

“I’m not seeing anyone else,” Mark said, looking closer at the roster.

Kyle sighed, “Her little trip into the barracks narrowed it down. That ticked off a lot of guards.”

Chevalier nodded.

“We could… you know…” Mark said, and then stopped and shook his head.

“What?” Kyle asked.

“Bring them back.”

“They were drinking,” Kyle reminded him.

“I know, it was just an idea,” Mark said.

“I say we bring in three of them whether they like her or not. They don’t have to like it, and training is only a few months,” Damon said, coldly.

“We’ve not had good luck with trainees who don’t like Emily,” Kyle said.

“Is it the recruits, or is it the mortal though?”

“Watch it,” Chevalier warned.

“I’m just saying… if the problem is the attitude of the new recruits, we can handle that. However, as seen previously, if the problem is with the girl, then we always just let it slide.”

Kyle frowned, “We don’t just let it slide.”

Damon smiled, “Yes you do. That mortal has all of you in this room wrapped around her little finger.”

“I think not,” Mark growled.

“Ok”

“Get back to the roster,” Kyle snapped.

“There aren’t any more unless you start pulling them out of the individual covens,” Mark said.

“I didn’t realize how many didn’t like her,” Chevalier said, narrowing his eyes.

“They just don’t know her,” Mark told him.

“Pick three at random. Kyle will control them, and we’ll let the girl just throw her temper tantrums alone,” Damon said, shutting the book.

“The girl, while doing training, is to be considered an officer, and demands the respect as such,” Kyle said, glaring at Damon.

“Pull three from the barracks, anyone except Kenneth. Kyle, you’ll just have to watch them,” Chevalier said irritated.

Kyle nodded.

“Damon will be with you for the first few days, he’ll help,” Chevalier added, and Damon began to scowl.

Kyle grinned, “Sounds good.”

“I won’t coddle her,” Damon said, bluntly.

“She wouldn’t let you if you tried,” Chevalier told him, and looked up just before someone knocked on the door.

“Come in,” Kyle called.

The head gardener came in holding Allen's hand, "He was wandering the front lawn."

Chevalier picked Allen up and put him on his lap, "Oh? Where's your Mom?"

"In the wall," Allen said, picking up a pen. He brought the roster over by him and started to draw loops on it.

Damon grinned.

"What do you mean in the wall?" Chevalier asked him.

Kyle reached over and pulled the roster away from Allen.

Allen shrugged, "She fell into the wall."

"That doesn't make any sense. How do you fall into a wall?" Chevalier asked, confused.

"First you have to be Emily," Damon said, and hushed when everyone glared at him.

Allen crawled out of Chevalier's lap, "You go like this."

Allen put his ear up against the wall, and then made the motion of falling forward, "Like that."

Chevalier picked him up again, "I see, and where is this amazing wall?"

“In the game room,” Allen said, and pulled a handful of smashed popcorn from his pocket. The heku in the room all wrinkled their noses and turned away from him.

“Time to go save the mortal,” Damon said, following them all out of the conference room.

“You don’t have to come,” Kyle snapped at him, as they walked toward the game room.

“Oh, I wouldn’t miss this for the world,” Damon grinned.

Chevalier glared at him, and he became serious again.

“That smell is awful,” Damon said, as they entered the room. He put his arm over his nose.

“It’s just popcorn,” Chevalier said, trying not to grimace.

“This wall,” Allen said when Chevalier let him down. He ran to the wall with the dartboards.

“She fell into this wall?” Kyle asked, running his hands along the solid wall.

“Yup”

Damon leaned up against the wall between dartboards, “I say we leave her.”

“Damon,” Kyle growled.

Damon just shrugged, “I was kidding. You can’t fall through a solid wall. The kid’s imagining things.”

“When did Mommy fall through the wall?” Chevalier asked, amused.

“When the movie started.” Allen pointed as the credits ran along the TV screen.

“Come on,” Chevalier said, picking Allen up. “Let’s go find her. I need to get back to my meeting.”

“No!” Allen frowned. “She’s in the wall.”

“Drinking younger and younger these days,” Damon said, walking forward a few steps.

“Enough, Allen. She’s not in the wall,” Chevalier said, a little more sternly.

“Yes she is,” Allen yelled, crossing his arms. Chevalier had to grin, when he did that, he looked just like Emily.

Chevalier put him down, “Mark, stay here with Allen while we look for Emily, that’ll be easier.”

Allen ran to the wall and pushed against it. There was a sound similar to electricity, and with a lot of force, he was able to stick his hand through the wall. The heku all gasped and went to the wall.

“See,” Allen said, and tried to get to the wall, but Kyle held him back.

Mark walked up to the wall and touched it right where Allen had gone through, “It’s solid.”

“It can’t be solid,” Damon said, and tried it himself, but his hand hit solid wall.

Kyle moved Allen closer to the wall and took his hand. They both reached out for it. Kyle’s hand stopped when it hit solid rock, but Allen’s hand disappeared.

“She’s really in there?” Chevalier asked Allen.

“She fell in,” Allen said, smiling. He was glad the others believed him now.

“Sam?” Chevalier called out, and turned when the familiar appeared.

“Yes?”

“Walk through that wall,” Chevalier said, pointing to the dartboards.

“Erm… ok,” he said. Sam walked toward the wall, put his hands up, and stopped when they touched the wall.

“Can’t go through it?” Kyle frowned.

“No… it’s a solid wall.” Sam said, confused.

Allen stuck his hand through again, when he pulled it out, he shivered, “Cold in there.”

Sam watched him with wide eyes.

“Well, well, a Mortal Trap,” Damon said, grinning.

Emily quit running and bent over with her hands on her knees. She was breathing hard from running and her hands hurt. She’d been running through the corridor in the dark, feeling ahead of her. Numerous times her hands would feel bones or sharp rocks, and she would move away in a panic. She finally regained control of the terror and stopped to rest. It was colder here than in the first room with the shackles, and she felt like she had been moving downhill.

“Think... think… skeletons cannot move,” she said to herself, and the corridor lit up. She looked up at the torches and grabbed one off of the wall. She was in a narrow stone corridor that extended as far as she could see in both directions. She decided to head back the way she had come.

“Those were rumors,” Leonid told Maleth. He looked again at the wall, hoping for some clue as to how to get through.

“Rumors yes, passed down through the ancients… but what if they weren’t rumors, that would explain all of this,” Maleth said.

“Why have I not heard of these?” Chevalier asked, irritated.

“You hated the ancients from the moment one of them made you. They weren’t about to tell you about their games,” Leonid said.

“So... enlighten me on these rumors,” Chevalier said. He looked down at Allen, who was asleep in his arms.

“They were called Mortal Traps. They were enchanted so only mortals could enter. This kept any heku from going in and saving them,” Leonid said, still watching the wall. “Once the mortal was inside, the ancients would gather and watch what was going on inside the trap. The

entertainment came from the ability of the trap to read fears and emotions of the mortals. Ancients enjoyed watching as mortals were faced with their greatest fears, and eventually either starved to death or went insane."

"They were all sealed when the ancients were banished," Maleth said.

"Apparently not all of them," Damon said, hiding his amusement.

"What do you mean the ancients could view them? How?" Kyle asked.

"They were just rumors," Leonid said again.

"How?" Chevalier asked, watching Allen.

"There were portals by the trap entrance that would let them see what was going on inside. The torches were the source of the enchantment. They become active whenever they hear a mortal's voice," Leonid said, sitting down.

"What are other options?" Chevalier asked.

"It's a Mortal Trap, everything fits," Damon said.

"Just for the sake of argument, what was rumored to happen when a mortal got out of the trap?" Kyle asked.

Leonid shook his head, "None got out."

“We can solve this… let’s summon the portal and see if it’s here,” Mark suggested.

“How was it done?” Chevalier asked, looking at Leonid.

“It takes an ancient,” he told them.

Everyone grew quiet as they considered other options.

“Think a quarter ancient could open it?” Kyle asked, turning to Allen.

Chevalier frowned, “What would he have to do?”

“It won’t hurt to try, right?” Kyle asked.

“No, it won’t hurt,” Leonid said, and blurred out of the room. He came back less than a minute later with a book.

“Allen?” Chevalier said shaking him gently. “Wake up.”

Allen rubbed his eyes and sat up, “Is Mommy back?”

“Not yet, I need you to do me a favor.”

“What?” he asked, and then yawned.

Chevalier looked at Leonid, who was skimming through a book.

“Aha, here it is,” he said. “Ok Allen, put your hands up and say *Ostendo mihi*.”

Allen frowned, “What?”

Chevalier whispered into Allen’s ear. He lifted his hands and said “Ostendo mihi.”

The fireplace roared to life, and an image slowly appeared in the flames. As the image cleared, the heku saw Emily standing in a dark hallway with a torch in her hand. She was looking around and breathing rapidly.

“Answers that,” Damon said, sitting down in front of the fireplace.

“Get out,” Chevalier said to him. Damon nodded and blurred from the room.

“Would you like us to leave?” Maleth asked, and put his hand on Chevalier’s shoulder.

“Sam take Allen. The rest of you can stay,” he said, moving his chair closer to the flames. “We need to find her a way out of there.”

The other heku joined him and watched intently.

“I’m sorry Chevalier. I had no idea there was a Mortal Trap in this palace,” Maleth said, sadly.

Chevalier just watched.

Emily stood up and looked down the corridor a little further. She walked forward, and then paused to read something written on the wall. She held the torch up and read the red words '*Never trust a heku. You will die down here.'*

She ignored the writing and looked back down the hallway, where she saw a dark opening. Emily held the torch up and walked forward slowly. The image in the flames followed her as she rounded the corner, and raised the torch to see into the room.

She walked in, carefully avoiding the skeleton crumpled in the corner. She ran her fingers along words etched into the far wall. Emily spun quickly and held the torch up when she thought she heard movement from the corner. She watched the skeleton for a few moments, and then noticed the shoes lying by his decayed feet. Her breath vapors came more rapidly as she crawled slowly toward the skeleton with her hand reached out.

As she touched the shoelace, she wrapped a finger around it and watched the skeleton carefully as she brought one shoe towards her. In a flash, the skeleton reached out and grabbed her wrist. Emily screamed and jerked her body backwards, pulling against the skeleton's grasp. She kicked a bare foot up and caught the skeleton in the face. The skull fell off of the body and rolled against the wall. She yelled as she pried the

bone fingers from her wrist, dropping the torch in the process. Once she felt the fingers release, she ran into the corridor, tripping over something, she fell to the ground.

“Light,” she yelled, and looked up and down the corridor quickly when the torches lit.

Emily leaned against the wall and pulled her knees up to her chest. She ran her hands along her arms trying to warm them. Her feet were freezing because of the cold ground, and her t-shirt wasn’t helping at all to keep her warm.

“Emi?” she heard someone call to her.

She looked toward the sound, and scrambled to her feet, “Dad?”

Emily walked down the corridor, following the voice.

“Come to me Emi. You need to hurry,” the voice said.

Emily began to run. The torches lit a few steps in front of her. She stopped suddenly when she saw Allen standing ahead of her, smiling.

“You look good, Emi,” he said, putting his arms out to her.

“Dad?” she asked again, and took one step closer.

Chevalier growled and his anger filled the room.

Allen put his arms down and smiled, “It’s good not to trust.”

“Why are you here?” she asked, stopping a few feet in front of him.

“It’s important that you listen to me, very important. Do you understand?” he told her, sternly.

Emily nodded.

“The heku Emi,” His eyes were sad. “Do you remember what I told you when you were a little girl? What I told you about the strangers that bit you?”

“You said to stay away from them,” she said.

“I know you think he loves you, Emi, but he doesn’t… he’s a heku, all he wants is the blood you have, and the ability,” he said to her, his eyes were warm and caring.

“He loves me, Dad,” she said to him.

Allen shook his head, “No, he doesn’t. You need to trust me on this. Is he controlling?”

Emily frowned and nodded.

“Is he short-tempered and easily angered?”

She nodded again.

“Get away from him while you can, Emily. The heku do not love mortals. They use them,” Allen said, concerned.

“You don’t know these ones. They aren’t using me.” She tried to make him understand.

“Emi, you have to trust me. These are no better than the ones that fed off of you as a child. They want children from you. They want your bloodline, that’s all. I warned your mother, too, and look what happened,” he said, and took a step backwards.

“Dad, wait, don’t go,” she walked after him.

“I can’t stay. I just had to warn you,” he said, and disappeared into the dark shadows.

“Dad!” Emily said, running forward. She stopped when the empty corridor lit up in front of her.

Emily fell to her knees and watched where her Dad disappeared.

Chevalier leaned forward, putting his elbows on his knees, “How did they find this amusing?”

Leonid shook his head, “I don’t know.”

Emily stood up and looked up at the torches. She grabbed one and jammed it hard into the dirt floor so it stood up. She sat down by it and pushed her hands toward the flames. She frowned and sat her hand directly into the fire.

"No warmth. Nice," she said, and stood up again. She looked both ways down the corridor. "Come on Emily…"

Sighing, Emily set off down the long corridor again. She came to another room and peered around inside, "Light."

The room lit up and she checked twice, there were no skeletons. Emily looked carefully at the walls. Ancient drawings were painted on them, and they reminded her of the old cave paintings left by the Mayans.

She looked closer and realized they read like a story. First was a peaceful village, the people hunted and played. Then a heku arrived, his teeth were exaggerated in the old drawing. The story was continued on the next wall, and she followed along with it. Once the heku began to make friends with the people of the village, he moved in with them. Late one night, he descended on them in a mass slaughter. The next pictograph showed the heku laughing while blood dripped down his chin.

Emily frowned and turned around when she saw a shadow move. She put her back against the wall when a strange heku entered.

“Who are you?” she asked him.

“The Elder sent me to find you, are you ok?” he asked, concerned.

Emily nodded and smiled, “I’m ok, just cold.”

Chevalier’s fists tightened on the chair, and the wood splintered at his touch.

“Ready to go back to the palace?” he asked.

“More than ready,” she said, taking a step toward him.

“I’ll need payment first,” the heku said, and watched her.

Emily froze and took a step back, “What did you say your name is?”

“I don’t think I did.” He knocked her down quickly and sunk his teeth into her neck. His body pinned her to the cold floor.

Emily screamed and pushed at him. He suddenly disappeared and she got to her feet, clutching her neck. Panting, she looked at her hand, there was no blood. She felt her neck and the puncture wounds she expected to feel weren’t there.

Emily staggered out into the corridor again, still breathing quickly, “Light.”

The corridor’s torches lit up.

Emily blew her breath into her hands, trying to warm them, but it didn't work. Rubbing her arms with her hands, she sat down against the wall. She sat for hours and rocked on the cold ground.

"Emily," the voice sounded from ahead of her and she froze, her body tensing.

"No," Chevalier hissed.

"Keith?" Emily whispered, and her ex-husband stepped out of the shadows, smiling.

Emily took a step back. He was smiling and coming to her with his arms open wide.

"Stay back," she said, putting her hand out.

"Oh come on. I can help you," he said, and stopped. He adjusted the Stetson on his head and watched her.

"No you can't, go away," she said, angrily.

"I can, I can show you how to get back to him, Emily, back to Chevalier and Allen. They are really worried about you," he sounded worried.

"You… you are going to show me back to them?" Emily frowned.

“Of course. The vampires are good for you. I can see that now,” Keith took a step back. “I loved you. I just didn’t know how to show it. I only want what’s best for you, and that’s Chevalier.”

“I don’t believe you,” she said, hesitating.

“You don’t have to believe me. Let me take you back to him,” Keith said, putting a hand out.

Emily’s eyes filled with terror, and she turned and ran away from him. The footsteps behind her kept up with her pace, and she pushed herself harder, yelling for the lights every few seconds so she didn’t run into a skeleton.

Emily emerged into the kitchen of the Montana ranch house and she stopped. The tile floor was too cold against her bare feet. She turned to look behind her, and the passageway was gone. Only the back wall of the kitchen was there.

“Mommy!” she heard Allen call to her from the bedroom. She ran through the doorway and looked around. The room was covered in blood. It dripped from the ceiling and slid sickeningly down the walls.

Emily jumped at the heku on the bed. He had his teeth sunk into Allen’s neck and the toddler was no longer moving. She landed on his back and

wrenched his neck hard to the side. The heku fell against the bed, not moving.

Emily picked up Allen's lifeless body and cradled him in her arms. She kissed his bloody forehead and cried.

"Come on, Baby, wake up," she said, as tears streamed down her face.

"I'm sorry, Emily. It was an accident. I didn't mean to," Kyle said, standing up from the bed as blood fell down his chin.

"Wha… what…" Kyle said from the game room. He was horrified by his image in the fire.

Chevalier stood up, grabbed the pool table, and threw it at the wall, where it splintered into pieces and landed with a crash.

"You killed him," Emily said to Kyle.

"You can have another, it's ok," Kyle said to her, smiling. "Let me take him, at least let me finish. I'm still thirsty."

Emily glared at him and took a step back, "Stay away from him."

"He's already dead. It won't hurt if I have just a little more," Kyle said, moving toward her.

The heku in the game room knew the look on Emily's face. She was trying to turn him into ash.

Emily screamed, frustrated, when Kyle didn't even flinch as he reached out for Allen's body.

"No!" Emily screamed at him, and turned to run. The dark corridor appeared behind her and she carried Allen's body through the opening and into it.

"Light!" she screamed, and ran. She could hear Kyle walking quickly behind her, easily keeping up.

"Emily, stop," she heard the familiar voice behind her. She turned quickly and looked at him.

"Troy?" she asked, frowning.

The man smiled, "We miss you at the office, Emily."

"Help him," she begged.

"Help who?" Troy asked. Emily looked down at her empty arms, then back to the man.

"Where did he go?"

"Listen to me Emily, have I ever lied to you?" Troy said.

“No”

“You have to get away. You have to leave the heku to save yourself,” he said, his voice soft and tender.

“But…” she said, not sure what to say.

“Remember when you told me about Keith? Remember how I told you to leave him and offered to lend you some money?” he reminded her.

“Yes,” she whispered.

“You didn’t take my advice, now you see I was right though.”

Emily nodded.

“So trust me this time. Get away while you still can. Take your son and run,” he said, stepping back into the shadows.

“Troy, don’t go,” she said to him, but it was too late.

Emily turned to the wall, her eyes opened wide. She could hear voices from the other side of the wall.

“Chev!” she screamed, and then pressed her ear against the wall. She could hear the familiar voices clearly.

“How much longer?” Maleth asked.

“It takes time. I have to play the part or she’ll get suspicious,” Chevalier answered.

“If it’s another boy?” Leonid questioned.

“Then we try again. We’ll just tell her the boy died at birth. We don’t need another brat running around the palace,” Chevalier said.

Emily frowned.

“Agreed, just keep trying,” Leonid suggested.

“Oh I will. She’s a sexy little thing,” Chevalier said.

“You aren’t becoming attached are you, Elder?” Maleth asked.

“Hell no, I’ll enjoy her while I can, but when the time comes, I’ll drain her without a second thought,” Chevalier said, coldly.

Emily pulled away from the wall slowly.

Chevalier stopped watching the flames. He was watching his hands, enraged.

“I never said that,” Maleth said, frustrated. He looked at the other heku in the game room, “I swear.”

“We know,” Leonid told him, and touched his shoulder.

“The pattern is disturbing,” Mark said. “The ones she trusts, tell her to get away from us. The heku and the ones she don’t trust, tell her to stay with us.”

“Driving a wedge between the mortal and immortal worlds,” Maleth said, nodding.

Emily slunk down on the wall and sat on the cold ground. She pulled her knees up to her chest and wrapped her arms tightly around them, then sunk her head between her arms. Her entire body shook with cold and fear.

“We could get another mortal to go in after her,” Mark suggested.

“She won’t trust them,” Kyle said.

“There has to be something we can do. She’s been down there for almost 24 hours,” Mark said, frustrated.

“Even if we somehow managed to get a heku down there, what would they do? She wouldn’t listen to them, and if I had to guess, she’d run from them anyway,” Kyle said, watching Emily in the flames.

Emily screamed as two hands reached out and grabbed her bare feet. She kicked hard, but they pulled her down the corridor. The shadows were too dark to make out who it was. Emily turned to her stomach and tried

to claw at the ground. She was dragged into a small room, and when the torches lit, she flipped back around.

“Hello, Sweetness,” Vaughn said, letting her feet go.

Emily scrambled to her feet and turned for the corridor, but the opening closed. There was only solid wall behind her. She turned around and put her back against the wall.

“Stay away from me,” she said to him.

He stepped toward her and pinned her to the wall with his body. He took her wrists in his hands, and extended her arms out, then ran his nose up her neck, inhaling.

Emily struggled to get out of his grasp, “Let me go!”

“Not until I get what I was promised,” he said, and ran his cold tongue up the side of her face.

Emily brought her knee up hard, but he was too tall and it didn’t connect with him.

“You need to learn some manners, Child,” Vaughn said, and kissed her roughly. He screamed and pulled away from her, grabbing his lip.

Emily ran to the other side of the small room, the furthest she could get from him.

“You little Bitch, you bit me,” he said, snarling. “If you don’t learn some obedience, I’ll leave you down here permanently.”

Emily frowned, “This is your doing?”

He smiled, “Of course, I always get what I want.”

“Let me out of here,” Emily said, angrily.

“It’s only fair… you bit me…” Vaughn was on her in a second and had her cradled in his arms, his teeth buried in her neck.

This time, Emily felt the warm flow of blood, and her body became relaxed. She stopped fighting, and felt herself becoming soft and limp in his arms.

Vaughn looked up at her and grinned, then ran his tongue along the punctures in her neck, “See, that wasn’t so bad.”

Emily blinked a few times and then lunged out of his arms. She ran her fingers over the puncture wounds on her neck.

“You’ll like the rest of what I have planned too,” he said, stepping toward her.

Emily screamed in anger. She wasn't able to ash him either.

"Now, let's get this over with. Your blood is Encala, and we feel it only proper that you join us. We're needing leadership, and you and I… we could rule the faction," he said, smiling.

Emily watched him, suspiciously.

"I'm the strongest heku in the Encala, and you… my dearest Emily, are the only Winchester alive. With a few children, the Encala would be unstoppable," he said, smiling.

"You did this?" she asked, frowning.

"Yes, your loyalty is essential for us to rule… your everlasting loyalty," he said, looking into her eyes.

"I am loyal."

Vaughn smiled, "That's my girl. Prove it to me, and we'll leave this wretched place."

"Prove it to you?" she asked, confused.

"Yes, consummate the bond, and we can leave. It's that simple," he took a step towards her.

"You misunderstand who I'm loyal to," she said, looking up at him.

Maleth and Leonid both moved closer to the flame. Chevalier looked down at his hands, and Kyle glared at the wall.

“You must declare your loyalty to the Encala, then to me,” Vaughn said, sternly.

“I’m only loyal to one faction, and it’s not yours,” she said, watching him.

“You don’t have to really mean it though,” Vaughn said, taking her hand. “You just have to say it, and do that one little thing for me, and then we can get up to the warmth.”

Emily shook her head and took her hand away from him, “No.”

“You are trembling. Your mortal body can’t take this kind of cold much longer… feel it… it’s getting colder,” he said, and Emily could feel her hands and feet becoming numb. Steam rose off of her body as the temperature dropped.

“Run, Emily,” Alec said from inside the room. “Get away from the heku.”

She looked at her uncle confused, “What?”

“Listen to me. The heku killed your mother. They killed your brother, and your father. You have to get away from them, please believe me,” Alec said, pleadingly.

“Join the Encala, Emily, and this will all be over,” Vaughn said, ignoring Alec.

“Stop!” Emily screamed at them.

“Run,” Alec said to her, urgently.

“I will, I promise I will,” Emily said, with fear in her eyes. “Get me out of here and I will.”

“I can’t get you out of here, Em. You have to get out yourself, and then get away from the heku,” Alec said, and disappeared into the shadows.

“Don’t listen to that old man… join me and I will take you up where there’s food and warmth. I have Allen, too. You can be with Allen,” Vaughn said.

“Chevalier wouldn’t give Allen to you,” she said. Her voice was hesitant and timid.

“You heard them through the wall. All they want is to use you. He doesn’t care about the male child. A female heir is what he wants,” Vaughn said, sadly.

Emily felt herself losing hope. All of the bravery and courage she prided herself on having, seeped out through her freezing skin. Defeated, she sunk into the corner and her eyes were full of pain and despair.

Chevalier dropped his head into his hands. The rest of the heku turned away from the flames. The sight of Emily's broken spirit seemed too personal for them to witness. They didn't want to observe her desperate fight to save her life, the choice to join the Encala.

"Ok," she whispered.

Chevalier stood up and turned away from the flames. He offered her the dignity to surrender in peace.

"Come to me then, submit to me," Vaughn said, coolly.

"My decision is to die down here, to die an Equites," Emily whispered.

The heku in the game room all gasped and turned around to watch.

"Emily, no," Chevalier said, watching the fire.

She screamed and the flames went out, drowning the room in silence and darkness. The heku looked around, confused. Where the flame had been, was a small form curled up into a ball.

"Emily?" Chevalier said, shocked.

She raised her head and looked up at the heku staring at her. It was too dark, and she couldn't see into the room.

"Lights," Emily whispered, and then frowned when no torches came to life.

Emily felt along the fireplace wall until it opened into the room. She stood up slowly, as her eyes strained to see. She was still shivering. Her t-shirt and jeans were caked with mud, and her feet were black from the dirt floors of the trap.

"Who's there?" she asked, fearfully.

Kyle flipped on the lights and she shielded her eyes against the sudden brightness. A voice echoed from the fireplace, a soft whisper, "Emily, run."

Chevalier took a step toward her and she screamed, a blood-curdling scream that resonated off of the palace walls, then she ran for the door.

Chevalier put his hand out to stop the others, "Don't follow her."

"We can't let her go, she's terrified," Kyle said, frowning.

"I know… of us," Chevalier said, thinking quickly.

The heku from the game room ran out into the hallway when Emily screamed again. A heku guard was standing above her, trying to help her to her feet as she kicked at him violently. Her eyes were well past terrified.

“Back off,” Chevalier hissed, and the heku guard backed away from her.

“She just slipped, I was…” he said, but was hushed by Kyle.

Emily scrambled to her feet. Her frozen hands and feet were hindering her escape. She stumbled toward the doors just as Kyle ordered the door guards to disappear.

She threw open the palace doors and ran out into the dark night. She screamed at every noise, and ran hysterically toward Council City. Kyle gave the order for all heku in the city to go inside of their houses and stay there until further orders were given.

A light rain was falling, but it turned to hail before Emily made it to the stables. She ran past them, her feet cutting painfully on the gravel as she moved.

“We can’t let this go on,” Kyle said, frantically.

“She will turn you to ash if you touch her. I promise that,” Chevalier said.

“We have to do something,” Mark said, watching her stagger through the streets.

“I know that,” Chevalier growled at him.

“Emily, stop!” Chevalier called to her. She whirled around quickly and looked at him through the wet hair over her face.

“Stay back,” she growled at them, and took a few steps backwards.

“We will,” Chevalier promised her. “We saw what happened. It was an ancient’s room, and you got caught in it. Do you understand me?”

Emily nodded, but kept walking backwards, “Always blaming the ancients.”

“All of it was a trick, your Dad, Keith, all of them,” he said to her, staying as still as possible.

“Now you… are you part of that trick?” she scowled.

“No, but we also realize there’s no way to prove that to you.”

Emily took a step back and ran into someone. She turned suddenly and was face-to-face with Kenneth.

“What have we here?” he asked, looking down at her.

“Kenneth, I called general quarters,” Kyle yelled at him.

Emily balled her hands into fists, “You want blood from me, too?”

“Would love that, but not in front of the superiors,” he said, and then laughed.

“Kenneth…” Kyle warned.

Kenneth suddenly disappeared into a pile of soggy ash.

Chevalier sighed.

Emily turned around, “He ashed,” she said, confused.

“That’s because you’re out of the trap,” Chevalier told her.

“So I can ash you, too?” she asked, narrowing her eyes.

“Yes, if it will help prove to you we’re real, then go ahead, ash me,” he said, taking a step toward her.

Emily pulled her wet hair back away from her face.

“I don’t know what to do,” she said to no one.

“You need to get into the warmth,” Chevalier said to her, watching her shiver in the cold.

“I suppose I have to do something to get that,” she scowled.

“Just walk into the palace, that’s all,” he said.

“Do I have to pledge my undying devotion to something?”

“No,” he said, and then lowered his voice so only the heku could hear him. “You already did.”

“Allen is dead,” she said, her voice cracking.

“No he’s not. I didn’t kill him. I didn’t touch him,” Kyle said.

Emily looked around the dark streets.

“Get back,” she said, taking a step toward them.

The heku spread apart and left a wide path for her.

Emily headed back to the palace, leaving a trail of blood from her feet on the gravel streets. She turned often to check on them, making sure they weren’t too close.

Kyle gave orders to clear the palace, and heard the building fall silent.

The smooth tiles felt good on her feet as she entered the foyer to the palace. She was relieved to feel the warmth of the building, but it made her shiver harder. She walked up the stairs, leaving a trail of blood and water behind her. Maleth and Leonid left them and headed for the council chambers when Mark stayed at the foot of the stairs. Kyle and Chevalier followed her, but stayed a safe distance behind.

Emily opened the bedroom door and looked inside. She stepped in and turned around to check on the others. She shut the door and locked it.

“It’s going to be a long night,” Kyle said.

Chevalier nodded, “Damon?”

Damon appeared at their sides, “Yes, Sir?”

“Kyle will show you where Kenneth is. Revive him and bring him to my office,” Chevalier said, angrily.

Damon nodded and blurred from the palace with Kyle. Chevalier headed for his office, but kept a close ear on the bedroom up the stairs.

Chapter 13 - Sealing

“Enter,” Chevalier said when he heard the other Elders come to his door.

“How is she?” Maleth asked, coming into the office and sitting down.

“I don’t know. She locked the door.”

Leonid frowned, “It’s a lock.”

“It’s a request for privacy,” Chevalier told them.

“We’ve been researching how to seal the trap.” Leonid said, sitting down. “It shouldn’t be too hard, but we need the blood from a mortal.”

“Do it then,” Chevalier said, quickly.

“It has to be fresh blood, so we’ll need to bring in a mortal,” Maleth explained.

“Can’t you just get it and seal the door immediately?”

“No, it has to go directly from the mortal to the door,” Leonid said, showing Chevalier the book entry on it.

“We think…” Maleth said, and hesitated, “it should be Emily.”

Chevalier growled.

“Just listen to us,” Leonid said. “She’s the only mortal we’ve known that’s escaped from an ancient’s trap. She’s half ancient, her blood has got to be the most… well… capable, to seal the portal.”

“No,” Chevalier said. “Find another way.”

Maleth nodded, “We just had to ask.”

“We’ll bring a mortal in blindfolded, seal the door, and then they can leave,” Leonid said, softly.

“Can we even ask her?” Maleth asked.

“No,” Chevalier hissed.

“You’re right, she would say no anyway,” Maleth nodded.

“She would say yes… but I’m saying no.”

Chevalier sighed when there was another knock on the door, “Enter.”

Kyle walked in with Kenneth and Damon. Kenneth was scowling and still shaking from the burn and revival.

“One smoldering heku, at your request,” Damon said, shutting the door behind them.

“Do you want to explain why you felt it necessary to break the general quarters?” Chevalier asked, standing up.

Kyle pushed Kenneth so he was closer to the Elder.

“I… I thought there may be some trouble,” Kenneth said, nervously.

“What made you think there was the kind of trouble that would allow you to break an order?” Kyle asked him.

Kenneth looked at the ground, “It was my mistake. I heard that mortal talking and she sounded mad. We have all heard how she turns a heku to ash on a whim, and I thought you may need help.”

“That mortal?” Chevalier frowned.

“Ashes on a whim?” Kyle growled.

“Is that what happens in the barracks? Rumors spread about my wife?” Chevalier hissed.

Leonid addressed Kenneth, and spoke calmly, “I’ve seen more devotion out of that mortal tonight, than I have ever seen out of you, Kenneth.”

Kenneth growled.

“I don’t appreciate my orders being disobeyed,” Kyle said angrily, and the Elders backed off from him.

“I apologize, Sir. It was a misunderstanding,” Kenneth stood at attention.

“What we need is an example,” Kyle scowled.

Kenneth looked at him, nervously, “Sir?”

“Of what happens when my orders aren’t followed.”

“Yes, Sir. You have to see it though…” Kenneth said, becoming angry.

“See what?” Kyle asked.

“How that mortal runs this palace. It’s disgusting how you all cater to her, and abide by her every wish. Just once I wish your minds would

clear, and see her for what the rest of us do," Kenneth spoke as if he had limited time.

Chevalier glared at him, "Which is what exactly?"

"A spoiled brat."

"Damon," Kyle said.

Damon lunged at Kenneth and swiftly decapitated him.

He held up the heku's head, "We should hang it in the barracks."

Kyle grinned maliciously, "Do it. Don't mention Emily, just the broken order."

Damon nodded and blurred away with the head.

"Someone get this… thing… out of my office," Chevalier said, and watched as one heku arrived and removed the body, and another cleaned up the blood.

"I suggest we keep the entire palace on alert. Make sure if Emily comes out of her room, that she sees no one," Kyle said.

Chevalier nodded, "Put a shadow on her. Someone you trust to not be seen. If she leaves the palace, I want to know, and we need the city in their houses."

“I will do it,” Mark said, standing at attention.

Chevalier nodded, “Do not be seen.”

Mark nodded and blurred from the room.

Emily opened her eyes and looked around the room. It seemed surreal. She wasn’t sure what to believe. She was finally warm, and her clothes dried from the rain and hail the night before. She looked down at herself. All of her clothes were encrusted with dirt, and her feet were throbbing because of the cuts from the gravel. She hadn’t wanted to change, hadn’t wanted to even trust enough to undress.

“Emily?” Sam said from Allen’s door.

She turned and looked at him, suspiciously.

“Mommy!” Allen yelled, and ran at her. He jumped on the bed and into her arms. She held him tightly as tears spilled from her eyes. She kissed him and pulled him closer to her.

Sam walked slowly to the bed, “Are you ok?”

Emily's hair was knotted and dirty. Her clothes were covered in soot, and he couldn't help but glance at the bottom of her feet, which were full of cuts and inflamed skin.

Emily didn't answer. She just glared at him and held Allen.

"Do you want me to help you into the bathroom to clean up?" Sam asked, watching her carefully.

"Sir, Sam's with her," Mark said from outside her door, he whispered too softly for anyone but heku to hear.

"Damn, we forgot about Sam," Chevalier whispered back. "Is she angry at him?"

"No, she just sounds suspicious," Mark answered.

"You would like that, wouldn't you, Sam?" Emily asked, with a tense edge to her voice.

Sam wasn't sure what to say. He hadn't seen her for over 48 hours, and hadn't been informed of what happened to her while she was away.

"I… don't know how to answer that," he said, moving to the foot of her bed.

"Stay away from us," she said to him.

“Please let me help. I can get some food and bandage your feet.”

“I’m watching you,” she said, and he bowed and left the room.

“Sam’s out of the room,” Mark reported, quietly.

Chevalier relaxed some when he heard Sam order breakfast, enough for an army.

A few minutes later, Sam returned with something hidden in his shirt. He didn’t see Mark watching from the shadows, but he locked the door after he was inside.

“Sam’s back, he’s hiding something,” Mark whispered.

“Tell me if you hear anything, I want to know what he’s up to,” Chevalier said. He sent his senses out, but her lack of trust blocked him.

Mark watched as a heku knocked on the bedroom door and waited for an answer.

“Put it down and step away,” the servant heard from the shadows. He did as he was told and blurred away.

A few moments later, the door opened. Sam grabbed the tray and shut it again, quickly locking it.

“Mommy, let go, I’m hungry,” Allen said, pulling against her.

“Wait,” she said, and watched Sam as he put the tray on the table. He lifted the dome and walked backwards into Allen’s room.

When Allen’s door shut, Emily let Allen go. He ran to the table and started to eat the pancakes. Emily stood up slowly. Her entire body was sore, and her feet were screaming painfully. She limped to the table and sat down, looking around, suspiciously.

“Mommy… you’re dirty,” Allen said, and took another bite.

Emily grabbed a piece of bacon and ate it, fully expecting the food and warmth to disappear at any moment. Once she’d started eating, she couldn’t stop. When they were done, Allen ran into his room and got Sam.

Emily watched Sam carefully.

“Please, I got some things for the cuts on your feet,” Sam said, showing her some peroxide and bandages.

She nodded, but narrowed her eyes at him. He moved to her, slowly, and picked up one of her feet, setting it on his knee. He cleaned them and winced every time she did, he still wasn’t sure if she was going to kill him or not. Her eyes were vicious and untrusting. After he’d gently bandaged her foot, he moved on to the next and did the same. Once he was done, he stood and sighed with relief.

“Can I take Allen out? His tutor is here,” Sam said to her, lowering his eyes.

“Yes,” Emily said, apprehensively. She still wasn’t sure any of this was happening.

“Sam and Allen are out of the room,” Mark whispered from the shadows, unseen.

“What’s she doing?” Chevalier asked.

“Sounds like she’s back on the bed.”

“If she falls asleep, I want to know,” Chevalier said.

“Will do, and Sam forgot to lock the door,” Mark told him.

Only a few minutes later, Mark notified the Elder that she had fallen asleep. He watched as Chevalier blurred up and quietly opened the door. He checked for himself, and Emily was sound asleep. He left the door open for a fast escape and walked to the bed to look down at her. She hadn’t changed her clothes from the Mortal Trap, but he was glad to see her feet were bandaged.

He stood perfectly still and watched her. He knew from the motion of her face that her dreams weren’t pleasant, and that she could wake up at any moment.

Even in her sleep, Emily felt that she was being watched. She opened her eyes and sat up suddenly, looking around the empty room. The breakfast tray was still on the table, the fires were burning, but the room was silent.

Emily stood up and limped to the door of her room. She knew she couldn't stay there forever. She opened the door and scanned the hallways to make sure they were empty.

Chevalier heard Mark's order loudly, though he knew Emily's mortal ears couldn't pick it up. He ordered all of the hallways cleared immediately, which meant she was out of her room.

"Where is she going?" Chevalier asked, looking at his office door.

"Not sure yet, down the stairs," Mark answered.

Chevalier listened to the sounds of the palace. He was pleased to hear nothing but the sound of one set of uneven footsteps.

"She's going to the game room," Mark said, sounding uncertain.

Chevalier frowned, "Stop her if she tries to go through."

"Yes, Sir," Mark answered, and then paused before giving a report. "Just her arm. She didn't go all the way."

“I’m here, too,” Kyle whispered from the dark shadows in the game room.

Chevalier heard a scuffle and ran for the game room. He blurred inside and saw Emily on the floor with Mark sitting on her legs. Both Mark and Kyle were trying to catch her arms as she clawed at them and screamed. Kyle caught her wrists in his hands and held them to him.

“Emily,” Chevalier said, kneeling down. “You can go anywhere and do anything… but go through that wall.”

Emily stopped struggling and just watched him.

“Ok?” he asked. He wanted to reach out and touch her.

She just stared at him, skeptical.

“Let her up,” he said, and stood. Mark and Kyle both let her go and stood up, moving off into the shadows.

Emily stayed on the ground, not moving. Her eyes were fixed on Chevalier.

Chevalier backed slowly out of the room, “Three new recruits are starting today. Kyle and Damon will take care of them for you.”

She narrowed her eyes, still lying on the floor. When he was gone, she sat up and looked toward the shadows. She knew they were there. Kyle gave the order and both he and Mark left the room.

Emily got to her knees and stood up, slowly, and then limped back up the stairs into her room.

The three new recruits stood at attention facing Damon and Kyle. They were lined up in front of the stables.

“Here’s how this is going to work. We’re going to start with the non-horse related training until Emily gets back on her feet,” Kyle said to them.

“Yeah, I bet she stays off of her feet,” one of them said, grinning.

The other two laughed and he added, “And on her back.”

Damon blurred to him and knocked him to the ground with a fist to his neck. The guard coughed and choked for a few seconds, and then healed and looked up at the Chief Enforcer, wide eyed.

“That’s enough of that. She’s the Elders wife,” he scowled, and stood up.

The guard got up slowly and then fell back to attention.

Kyle watched them closely and continued, “I’ll say this once… and only once… Emily is to be treated like an officer when you are in her presence. She will teach you everything you need to know about horses, and will be treated with the uppermost respect.”

“Yes, Sir,” the three said, simultaneously.

“She isn’t to be touched either. I don’t care if it seems polite, keep your hands off and your noses away,” Kyle said to them, irritated at the smugness on their faces.

Damon and Kyle turned when they heard footsteps and saw that Emily was limping toward them. Kyle was surprised to see she’d showered and was wearing clean clothes. He turned back and glared at the three recruits.

“Good morning, Emily,” Damon said, looking at her strangely. Her eyes had changed, the fierce passion was gone.

She nodded at him and went into the stables, quietly followed by Ford.

“Follow her, get your horses,” Kyle said to them. They turned and followed her inside.

Damon looked at Kyle, and he shrugged.

Emily came out a short time later with the cattle prod in her hand. Damon winced when she walked past him, but she didn't stop. She continued into the storage room and put it away. She then walked over to Patra's stall and slipped onto her, bareback, and led her out to the front.

"Ok, bring your horses out here," Kyle said, frustrated.

The three heku walked out with their horses bridled and brushed. Emily watched them, but said nothing.

"Couple of rules, first, never stand or walk behind a horse. Only mount from the left and they are now your responsibility, you feed, water, and take full care of them," Kyle said, when Emily didn't speak up.

The largest of the recruits had a horse that was starting to shy away from him. He yanked hard against the reins, "Stupid horse, behave."

Emily slipped off of Patra and limped over to him. Kyle grinned, waiting for her to give the guard a lashing. She took the reins from the heku and hoisted herself up onto the nervous horse, clicked her tongue, and then walked the mare slowly out toward the city.

Kyle frowned and jumped on Patra, "Damon, watch them."

He kicked Patra into a gallop and caught up with Emily, "Em?"

“Yes?” she asked, quietly.

“Are you ok?” he asked, matching her speed.

“She’s just skittish around your kind. She’ll be ok,” Emily said, patting the mare’s neck.

“I wasn’t asking about the horse.”

Emily turned the mare around and headed back toward the stables. Kyle followed her, silently. She took the mare over by her guard and stopped her to face him.

“Take a step forward,” she softly said to the heku.

The guard looked at Damon, who nodded, and he took an irritated step toward the mare. The horse whinnied and took a nervous step back.

“Shhhhh,” Emily whispered, and patted the mare’s neck.

The guard snarled and took several steps toward the uneasy horse. The mare reared back and stomped at the guard, then bucked. Emily held on for a few seconds but then fell backwards, landing hard against the ground. She saw the horse’s hoof and was able to roll out of the way before it stomped her. Kyle grabbed the horse’s reins and pulled her way from Emily and the guard.

“What the hell was that?” Damon snapped at the guard, and then knelt down by Emily. He looked down at her as she tried to catch her breath.

“Are you hurt?” he asked her, and she shook her head. She slowly got to her feet and limped over to the mare. Taking the reins from Kyle, she led her back into the stable and disappeared around the corner.

Kyle was toe-to-toe with the guard in an instant, “What was that?”

“Stupid horse,” he growled.

Kyle swung back and punched the guard, shattering his lower jaw. The guard bent over in pain as his jaw healed.

“Anyone else want to act up?” he asked, turning to the other two.

The other two shook their heads as the third joined them.

“When a horse is acting strangely, let Emily take care of it,” he said to them, sternly. They nodded.

They waited a few minutes for Emily to bring out another horse, and when she didn’t, Kyle ordered the two to take theirs back to the stalls and give them food and water. Kyle took Patra’s reins and handed them to the third, telling him to do the same.

“She’s…” Damon started, but Kyle held up his hand.

“I hear,” Kyle said, and walked into the stable. It took him a few minutes to find her. Checking every stall and finding them empty, he finally crawled up into the loft and found her curled up and rocking on the straw.

He watched her for a moment. Her head was down against her knees and he could hear her crying softly.

“Em?” he whispered, hoping not to scare her.

She looked over at him and whispered, “Are you going to bite me?”

Kyle heard the heku below them freeze and listen.

“No,” he assured her.

“I can’t fight you,” she whispered, and laid her forehead back against her knees.

“How can we convince you that this is real?” he asked, softly. He was relieved when he heard Damon order the guards to return to the barracks.

“It’s not,” she whispered, and began to rock again.

Kyle silently jumped back down by the stalls and went out to Damon.

“Want me to talk to her?” Damon asked. “From what I could gather, I wasn’t in the trap.”

“Can you be nice?” Kyle asked, suspiciously.

Damon frowned, “Little credit.”

He walked into the stables and up the ladder to the loft. He tried not to look too hard at her as she rocked in her protective ball.

“Emily?” he asked, and she looked at him.

She held out her arm, palm side up, “Here, just leave my neck alone.”

“I’m not here to feed,” he said, flinching slightly at her scent. Part of the reason he hated her, was how sweet her blood smelled, how enticing it was.

“Then what do you want?” she whispered, and returned her forehead to her knee.

“I wasn’t in your trap,” he said, softly. “Can you trust me? I can help you.”

She shook her head, “Damon wouldn’t help me.”

“Come on, I’m not that mean,” he said, hurt.

“Either feed or go,” she whispered.

Damon jumped back down out of the loft and sighed when he walked up to Kyle, “That didn’t help.”

“I guess just leave her. Mark’s still trailing her,” Kyle said.

Kyle knocked on Chevalier’s office door.

“Enter,” Chevalier said to him. He looked up from a newspaper when Kyle walked in and sat down.

“Not good.”

“What happened?” Chevalier asked, putting down the paper.

“Emily came out to training.”

Chevalier raised an eyebrow, “Oh? That surprises me.”

“Yeah well… she’s not Emily. She barely spoke, didn’t even hardly react when a guard was mean to his horse. She got bucked off because of the guard and didn’t say anything to him. Now she’s rocking up in the loft,” Kyle told him.

“I should go talk to her,” Chevalier said.

“I wouldn’t. She thinks this isn’t real. I even tried Damon, with no luck,” Kyle said.

“You sent Damon?” Chevalier frowned.

Kyle sounded frustrated, “Yeah but he was too nice, so she didn’t believe it was him.”

“She said nothing when she got bucked off?”

“Nothing…” Kyle said, and sat up straighter. “I have an idea.”

Chevalier started to ask him what it was, but he had already blurred out of the office.

Emily sighed when she heard footsteps on the ladder. She wondered what horror was headed her way this time. She felt exhausted, her energy entirely depleted. She decided that death had to be better than this, and she was ready for it, welcomed it even.

She turned and saw Frank, Nelson, and Silas standing awkwardly in the loft.

“What?” she asked them, softly.

“We… um… heard what happened. Anything we can do?” Frank asked.

“Yes,” she said, softly.

Kyle smiled from down by the stalls, but began to panic when he smelled blood.

Emily cut her wrist on a rough nail on the wall of the loft, and held up her bleeding arm, “Just drain me quickly, that’s all I ask.”

Frank and Silas froze, wide eyed. The smell wafted past them, and their senses burned with hunger. Nelson took a step toward her, his hands curved into claws.

Frank knocked him upside the head, “What are you doing?”

Nelson blinked a few times and then looked at Frank, “I wouldn’t have.”

“You were going to,” Silas yelled.

“No I wasn’t,” Nelson said, walking back to them.

Emily watched them, and couldn’t help but smile slightly.

Nelson smacked Frank hard against the side of his head, and the two blurred into a fight. Emily couldn’t see what was happening, but could hear the growls and snarls. Silas watched intently, grinning at them.

Kyle appeared in the loft and soon had Nelson’s collar in one hand, and Frank’s in the other, “What are you two doing?”

“He went to feed,” Frank growled.

“I did not,” Nelson hissed at him.

“Go back inside,” Kyle snapped at them. Emily could hear them bickering as they left the stable.

“If I go back to prison because dim-wit over there couldn’t control himself, I’ll kill you both,” she heard Silas yell.

“I didn’t do anything but…” Frank’s voice trailed off as they entered the palace.

“Emily, I don’t care how fragile you are right now, you cannot go around cutting yourself and offering every heku a chance to feed,” Kyle yelled at her, angrily. “Furthermore, if you are going to allow the guards to walk all over you, then consider yourself fired.”

He growled angrily and stormed out of the stables.

“Come in, Kyle,” Chevalier said from his office.

Kyle walked in and slammed the door behind him and sat down roughly, “She’s going to get herself killed.”

Chevalier simply nodded, he hadn’t seen Kyle this angry in a long time.

“I fired her, just so you know… and I yelled at her,” he told the Elder.

“I see,” Chevalier said, frowning. He wondered how well Emily had taken that.

“She didn’t even fight back,” Kyle said, irritated, and still partially yelling.

Chevalier just watched him, figuring it was best if Kyle just got it all out before being questioned about yelling at Emily.

“Those morons I sent in there got in some argument after one of them decided it was time to take Em up on her offer to feed, and then they got into this huge fight right in front of her and…” Kyle stopped, and growled.

“Offer to feed?” Chevalier asked, that part had caught his attention.

“Yeah… she cut her wrist on a nail and asked that they drain her quickly,” Kyle yelled, throwing his hands into the air.

“She what!?” Chevalier growled, and then turned to the door when someone knocked. “Enter!”

He looked at the door, ready to kill whoever walked in, and his jaw dropped when he saw it was Emily. She limped in to his office with her hand behind her back.

“Em, I can’t believe you ask…” he stopped when she glared at him.

Emily brought out the cattle prod and touched it to Kyle’s neck just as he yelled, dropping him to the floor. She then turned and limped back out, slamming the door behind her.

Chevalier stood up and leaned over his desk, “You ok?”

“Oh, she did not just do that!” Kyle yelled, standing up, still shaking.

“I think you got your answer to yelling at her,” Chevalier said, grinning. His face fell, though, when he remembered her offer to the three prisoners.

“Did she really ask to be drained quickly?” Chevalier asked when Kyle got back into his chair.

“Yes, after cutting herself. We have good guards, but you can only ask so much out of a natural predator. She’s lucky the three of them didn’t attack instantly,” Kyle said, feeling the side of his neck, it still tingled.

“Where are they now?” Chevalier asked.

“Back in the cells. I let them out for one purpose and they screwed it up,” Kyle scowled.

“Let them out. Reinstate them to the Cavalry.”

Kyle frowned, “Do what?”

“If they can pass up an offer like that, they deserve to be part of Emily’s cavalry. Yes they drank, I haven’t forgotten that, but that showed loyalty,” Chevalier explained.

Kyle nodded, “You’re right, I’ll let them out on good behavior.”

“Now what to do with Emily. I wonder if she’s back to trusting us,” Chevalier wondered out loud.

“I guess only one way to find out,” Kyle said. “I’ll go yell at her for shocking me and see how that goes.”

“I’ll have Damon ready,” Chevalier chuckled.

“Yeah I guess you’re right. I don’t feel like spending my day smoking,” Kyle said.

“I’ll go, and see if she trusts me yet,” Chevalier said, standing up.

Kyle followed the Elder as he went to the kitchen to grab lunch for Emily. He walked up the stairs quietly and stopped outside of her door. He sighed when he found the door locked, and he knocked.

It opened only about an inch, “What?”

“Em, I have your lunch,” he said, holding out the tray.

Chevalier heard her limp over and sit on the bed. Taking that as a sign to enter, he walked in and sat the tray down on the table. He turned to her and saw she was sitting cross-legged on the bed, watching him accusingly. Her eyes were still red from crying.

He walked over to the table, “It’s a hamburger and fries, your favorite.”

Emily said nothing and watched him.

Chevalier turned to her, “I didn’t poison it, come eat.”

Emily moved ever so slightly, and Chevalier noticed she had the cattle prod gripped in her hand.

“Are you going to electrocute me?” he asked.

“If you get too close, yes,” she said, seriously.

“You’d be better off ashing. The cattle prod only works for a couple of seconds,” he suggested.

Emily screamed and grabbed at her right thigh.

Chevalier was heading for her side when she held up the prod, “Get back.”

“Is it the runes?” he asked, stopping.

Emily jumped out of bed and walked on the sides of her feet as fast as she could, and went into the bathroom. Chevalier cringed when he heard her groan from the pain.

She emerged a short time later, her eyes were furious.

“Are you ok?” Chevalier asked from across the room. When he heard her coming, he’d moved far away from the bathroom.

Emily ignored him, grabbed the cattle prod, and headed out the door.

“Where are you going?” he asked from closer behind her, and she spun to face him.

“Stay away from me,” she said, gritting her teeth.

He put his hands up and backed away, knowing Mark would follow her wherever she was going. She used the railing to take some weight off of her feet as she went down the stairs.

“She’s going to the prison, do I let her?” Mark whispered into the air.

“Yes,” was the response.

Chevalier blurred down into the prison, motioning for the guards not to make a noise that he was there. He watched as Emily walked up and down the aisle of prisoners looking for Vaughn. When she found him, she stopped and turned toward his cell.

“Get it off of me,” she demanded.

Vaughn stood up and smiled, “Is that for me?” He motioned to the cattle prod.

“No, it’s for the nosy heku following me around,” she said, glancing toward Mark and Chevalier.

“Damn,” Chevalier whispered and stepped toward her.

“Get it off, now,” she said again.

“No, it will come in handy when I get out of here and need you,” he said, smugly.

Emily narrowed her eyes at him and watched as he screamed and fell convulsing to the floor.

“Emily, stop,” Chevalier said from beside her. She turned to him and he was barely able to dodge out of the way of the cattle prod.

Vaughn stumbled to his feet, “I demand that you do not do that again!”

“You demand?” she asked, raising an eyebrow. Vaughn fell to his knees, gripping his chest and groaning with pain.

Vaughn fell against the floor, panting. After a few moments, he got to his feet shakily, “If you do that again, I’ll never get you out of this hell.”

“What hell are you referring to?” she asked, suspiciously.

“The one you’ve been in since you stepped through my enchanted wall. Everything’s calm now, but wait, you disobey me and it will all come back.”

Emily took a step back, “What?”

“Just a minute,” Chevalier growled.

“You don’t seriously think everything’s safe for you now, do you? That corridor is just out of reach. In an instant, I can bring it back, and all of the terror with it,” Vaughn chuckled.

“Keys,” Chevalier demanded of the guard, and immediately began opening the cell door.

“I’m the only one that can help you, Emily. I’m the only one that knows how to end it. If he kills me, he’s only killing the enchanted image of me, and then you’ll be alone. No way out,” Vaughn said, watching her.

“Chevalier, get out,” she said, quickly.

“Don’t listen to him, he’s lying,” Chevalier said from inside the cell.

“Get out before I ash you,” she said, and Chevalier felt the slightest bit of burn start in his chest.

“Turn him to ash, Emily. Do it and show me your loyalty,” Vaughn smiled.

Chevalier backed out of the cell and the burning stopped. He turned to her, “He’s lying. You have to trust me.”

“Emily, listen to Chevalier,” Mark said, stepping out of the shadow.

“If I let you go, will you let me out?” she asked Vaughn.

He nodded, “Come with me. I hold the key to the runes. You can’t resist it forever. Soon you’ll come when I call.”

“I’ll worry about the runes later, just let me out of this corridor,” she said, begging.

“Emily, you can’t let him go,” Chevalier said, and touched her hand softly. She screamed and jerked away from him, landing on her back on the floor. She crawled backwards way from him, frantically.

Emily scrambled to her feet and ran up the stairs, ignoring the pain from the gravel cuts. She disappeared into the upstairs foyer.

Chevalier growled at Vaughn, “How dare you.”

“Have fun with her now. She’ll come running to me soon enough,” Vaughn said to him.

“Unless you’re dead first.”

“You can’t kill me. Code says you have to keep me until a release is negotiated. I’m the only Elder the Encala have,” he said smugly, and sat down.

“So you’re an Elder now?” Chevalier asked.

“Yes, when all three Elders died, I was the only council member to take their place,” he explained. “When Emily comes to me, she’ll sit at my side as the second… well… after she’s given me a female child and we turn her into an immortal, of course.”

Mark held Chevalier back and whispered into his ear, “Just wait, we’ll get him.”

They headed back to the door and Chevalier turned to the guards.

“I don’t care if she threatens to ash you. If I catch her down here, you’ll wish she had,” he growled and walked up the stairs.

“Where is she?” he asked at the top of the stairs.

“Stable,” he heard a voice say from far away.

“Kyle,” Chevalier said, and Kyle blurred to his side. Chevalier stood and looked out the window to the stables as Mark filled Kyle in, word-for-word, on what had just occurred.

“How did he even know?” Kyle asked, baffled.

“It has to be a connection through those runes,” Chevalier said.

Chevalier’s eyes narrowed as he saw the silhouette of a figure on top of the stable roof, “What is she doing?”

Kyle looked out, “I’m not sure.”

“Dad!” Emily called into wind.

Chevalier frowned.

“Help me,” she whispered softly, and sunk down into her protective ball and rocked.

“We could sedate her and bring her in here. We can keep her here until we figure out how to convince her,” Mark said.

Chevalier shook his head, “We aren’t going to earn her trust by betraying it.”

Damon walked up and looked out the window, “Just leave her. She’ll figure it out on her own. You all indulge her too much.”

Chevalier growled at him.

Damon looked over at him, “I just mean… she’s not hurting anyone out there but herself. When she decides to see logic, she’ll come down.”

“She’s up there because our ancestors scared her to death,” Kyle snapped at him.

“She’ll live,” Damon said. He shrugged and walked off when the other heku glared at him.

Chevalier turned around and gasped just as Emily jumped off of the roof of the stables. Chevalier, Mark, and Kyle blurred to the other side of the stables, prepared to find her dead on the ground. Instead, she was lying on her back on a loose pile of straw that stood taller than the heku. When they saw her crawling out of the straw, they scattered quickly and joined up back in the palace.

"I didn't…" Kyle said, and Chevalier cut him off.

"Don't say it," he said.

"But I…"

They watched as she dusted straw off of herself and went into the storage room.

"Tell me if anything happens," Chevalier said, disappearing into his office.

"What do you think she's doing?" Mark asked.

Kyle shrugged.

"Erm… does she… no way," Mark said, watching Emily walked toward the palace.

"Yeah she does," Kyle said, frowning. "Kind of weird things to have."

“Should we move back?” Mark asked, disappearing into the shadows, followed by Kyle.

Emily walked into the palace. She had a 9mm tucked into the back of her jeans, and a shotgun in her hand. She ignored the fact that the door guards were gone, and stepped into the foyer. Without stopping, she made her way to the prison entrance and walked down the stairs.

“Damn,” Kyle said, following her.

The guards looked at her fearfully when they saw her, “You can’t come down here, Ma’am.”

“Yes I can. Hand me the key to Vaughn’s cell.” She held out her hand.

“No, Ma’am, strict orders from the Elder,” he said.

“Don’t make me ash you, just give me the key.”

The two guards looked at each other nervously, “No, Ma’am.”

“Fine,” she said, and Kyle watched, shocked, when both of the door guards turned to ash. Emily went through their pockets and pulled out the keys.

“I… I… can’t believe… she did that,” Mark stammered.

“We’ll call Damon in a sec. Let’s find out what she’s doing first, before we raise the alarm,” Kyle suggested, and they moved to the dark shadows around Vaughn’s cell.

“Hello, my bride,” Vaughn said, standing up.

Emily opened the shotgun and loaded two shells of buckshot into it. She cocked it back.

“You can’t kill me with a gun,” Vaughn chuckled.

“I’m not looking to kill you, just hurt you,” she pushed the shotgun through the cell bars. Kyle and Mark covered their ears less than a second before the first shot rang out through the palace. The second shot came a few moments later, and she sat the shotgun down by her feet.

Vaughn was moaning in his cell, but healing quickly from the small pellet wounds. Emily unlocked the door and pulled out the 9mm. She pointed it right at Vaughn and quickly shot off 16 rounds into his head. Blood covered her and the walls of the cell and Vaughn screamed in agony.

“We should stop her,” Mark said, and leaned back against the wall.

“Yup, we should,” Kyle agreed, watching.

Emily stepped inside, lowering the 9mm down toward Vaughn. She aimed directly at his groin and fired off another 9 rounds.

“Ouch,” Mark whispered.

Kyle cringed.

“Still wanna get it on?” she asked, and emptied the rest of the clip into him. She hit a button and the clip fell to the ground. She pulled another out of her pocket and jammed it into the gun and leveled it back at Vaughn.

“Ready to take the runes off?” she asked him.

Vaughn just groaned. He was healing, but not fast enough to alleviate the pain.

Damon, Maleth, Leonid, and Chevalier blurred into the corner with them.

“Who is shooting a gun in my palace?” Maleth growled.

Mark pointed at Emily.

“Ok,” Emily said, and emptied the second lip into the heku.

“That has to hurt,” Kyle said.

Mark nodded.

Chevalier raised his eyebrows.

Emily stepped out of the cell and dropped the 9mm on the floor, picking up the shotgun. She grabbed the barrel and slammed the stock of the gun into Vaughn's head. The sickening crack was followed by a splash of new blood onto Emily and the walls.

"We were talking about how we should stop her," Kyle said, leaning back against the wall.

"Yeah I guess we should," Mark nodded.

Emily screamed and continued to smash Vaughn with the stock of the shotgun relentlessly. Blood was dripping from the walls, and she was covered with pieces of flesh and blood. She started at his head, and moved down to shatter both of his legs. His screaming had turned to gargles as he fought to breathe through the blood in his mouth.

"Did you want to stop her or should I?" Kyle asked casually.

"Doesn't matter to me," Mark answered.

"We really do need to stop her," Damon said, concerned.

"Want to remove it now, Child?" she asked, standing over him.

He tried to get his hands under him, but Emily smashed the butt of the shotgun down on the back of his neck, crushing his vertebrae. He fell limp to the ground.

Emily took a second to catch her breath, and then brought the shotgun up again. She brought it down toward Vaughn's back, but he rolled out of the way, grabbed her foot, and she slammed into the ground.

The Equites reacted quickly. Mark and Kyle tackled Vaughn while Chevalier grabbed Emily under her arms and pulled her out of Vaughn's grasp.

"I'm not done!" Emily yelled, trying to crawl back into the cell.

"I think he's had enough," Chevalier told her, grabbing her waist to stop her from going back inside. He lifted her up to her feet.

She was dripping with blood and pushed her hair off of her face to see Vaughn better. Kyle and Mark managed to pin him against the ground, he was almost entirely healed.

"Take it off," she glared down at him.

"No," he growled.

Emily ran forward and kicked. Vaughn screamed when her foot connected with his lower jaw and broke it into several pieces.

Chevalier pulled Emily back out of the cell, chuckling.

“Impressive, for a mortal,” Damon said, leaning against the wall and laughing.

Maleth and Leonid disappeared up the stairs.

“Guess I better go bring back the guards,” Damon said, and walked over to the two piles of ashes by the door.

Emily tucked the 9mm into the back of her pants and picked up the bloody shotgun. She looked at Vaughn in the clutches of Kyle and Mark, and walked toward the door. She glared once at the one revived door guard and moved slowly up the stairs to the foyer. Chevalier followed her, keeping a slight distance.

Emily stopped at the bedroom door and turned to Chevalier, “Where’s the money from the sale of my ranch?”

He frowned, “It’s in an account in your name.”

“I’ll need to get at it,” she said, turning toward the door.

“Emily, if you need something, all you have to do is ask,” he said, following her.

“Just give me the account, and I won’t have to ask permission for anything.”

“I didn’t say you had to ask permission, but I’ll give you anything you want.”

“As long as I ask for it,” she said.

“That’s not what I mean, and you know it,” he said, sitting down.

“What I need is a laptop with an Internet connection and that account information when I get out of the shower… add in some privacy, and I’ll be good,” she walked into the bathroom and shut the door.

Emily had to take a very long shower to get all of the blood off of her and out of her hair. She dried off and threw on a long t-shirt and jeans, then went out into the bedroom. She nodded when she saw the laptop and a debit card sitting beside it. She grabbed her cell phone and made the call.

A few hours later, Emily was done. She went out to find Chevalier and finally found him and the other Elders in the game room. She stepped in just in time to catch the end of the conversation.

“We’ll find a mortal soon. We have to be selective,” Maleth said.

“A mortal for what?” she asked, and they turned to look at her.

Chevalier glared at Maleth when he stepped forward, “We need a mortal’s blood to seal the door forever.”

“No,” Chevalier hissed.

“That’s all you need? A mortal’s blood?” she asked, skeptically.

“Emily, no,” Chevalier said to her.

“Do it then,” she said, and walked forward, holding her wrist out.

“I said no,” he growled.

“Oh sure, then what? Let Allen walk through there?” she kept her wrist out to Maleth.

“There is another way,” he said.

“Not fast enough,” she said to Chevalier and then turned to Maleth. “Do it.”

Maleth grabbed Emily’s hand and watched Chevalier as he stormed out of the room, “Just a bit, Emily.”

She nodded, “Do it quickly.”

Leonid began to chant in an ancient language, and Emily watched as the doorway began to glow. She felt the sting on her wrist as Maleth pressed the tip of a dagger into the soft flesh of her arm. He held her arm out

toward the door, and as the blood dripped onto it, the doorway began to collapse into a swirl of black clouds.

Emily watched, wide eyed, as the doorway showed, for one moment, what was on the other side, and she had to fight the urge to run. There was a loud clash of thunder and a flash of light when the door sealed.

Emily stepped forward and touched the wall, running her fingers along the solid wall. She fell to the floor suddenly, crying out in pain when her thigh began to burn.

Maleth leaned down beside her, "Breathe through it, Emily, take deep breaths."

Leonid watched them, helplessly.

Emily groaned and clutched at her thigh. Maleth tore the side seam of her pants open to her thigh, and looked at the runes. They were red, and inflamed, and blisters started to appear.

"There has to be a way to get this off," he said to Leonid.

"I have been researching it. I can't find anything," Leonid said.

"Come here, Child," Maleth said, picking Emily up. He cradled her in his arms and left the game room, heading up the stairs.

Emily squeezed her eyes shut and moaned as she leaned her head against Maleth's neck. He walked into her room and laid her on the bed as Chevalier stood up from the chair and blurred to her.

"It's the runes," Maleth said, when Emily grabbed her thigh and screamed.

"I have her," he growled at Maleth, who left quickly and shut the door.

Emily finally relaxed some and laid her forehead on the bed, still holding her thigh.

"We'll make it stop, Em, I swear," he told her, and touched her hand lightly.

She pulled her hand away from him, "Don't touch me."

"I'm sorry," he said, and took a step away from her.

Emily slipped her torn jeans off and turned to look at her thigh. The runes were no longer red and inflamed. She touched them, surprised they weren't even sore to the touch.

"Emily, we need to talk," Chevalier said, watching her closely.

"Yes, we do," she agreed.

“I haven’t done anything to make you not trust me, but I know that you don’t,” he said, and slowly moved to the bed and sat down.

“I trust you,” she told him, but watched him carefully.

“No you don’t, or I would still be able to pick up feelings and emotions from you. Do you still love me?” he asked, unsure.

She nodded, “Yes.”

“Then what’s wrong?”

“I… need time,” she said, looking into his eyes.

“Time away from me?” he asked, hiding the hurt from his eyes.

“Time away from everything,” she said, laying her hand on his leg.

He nodded.

“Allen and I are leaving in two weeks.” She sat up cross-legged beside him.

He frowned, “Where are you going?”

“I’m going to visit my Uncle Alec,” she told him.

She could see the concern and frustration in his face.

“We’ll stay for two weeks, and then we’ll come back,” she said, touching his face.

“Is there no other way?” he looked into her eyes.

“My cousin is getting married. I’m going to be in the wedding. Right now I need to just get away for a while,” she tried to make him understand.

“It wouldn’t be away if I went, would it?”

She shook her head, “Please don’t take this the wrong way. I’m not getting away from you. I’m getting away from everything here.”

He nodded, “One guard?”

Emily smiled, “No.”

Chevalier put her head in his hands and pulled her face close to his, “Come back.”

Chapter 14 - Vacation

“I’m done packing,” Emily said, turning to Sam and Chevalier. “Will you two stop moping?”

“I don’t see why I can’t go,” Sam said, sulking.

“Because it’s an Allen and I thing. Allen’s one of the ring bearer’s and I have to wear this and act like I like it,” Emily said, holding up a light pink, rather revealing dress.

“You’re going to wear that in front of Jeff?” Chevalier asked.

Emily laughed, “Rein in the jealousy, Chev.”

Emily crawled onto Chevalier’s lap and faced him, her knees at his sides, “Remember what I said, about followers?”

He nodded, “Yes, but I don’t like it.”

“That’s the deal… I catch one follower, and not only will I ash them, I won’t come back,” she said, seriously.

“I don’t like it, not at all. What if you happen across an Encala or a Valle?” he scowled.

“I won’t.”

“What if you do?”

“I won’t,” Emily said. “Hold out your hand.”

Chevalier held out his hand and frowned when she set her cell phone in it, “No.”

“Yes, no calls,” she crawled off of his lap.

“You have to take your cell phone,” he growled.

“No,” she said, and threw a bag over her shoulder.

“Emily, I have to insist, in case of an emergency,” Chevalier said.

“No.” She walked up and kissed him softly.

“I can’t lose contact with you for two weeks,” he said, narrowing his eyes.

“Yes… you can,” she told him and picked Allen up.

“I’ll walk you out,” Chevalier said, taking Allen from her. He grabbed their bags with his other hand and followed her down the stairs.

“It’ll be good for the palace. They don’t have to be on mortal alert,” she grinned.

“They aren’t on mortal alert,” he told her.

“Oh? What about those guards in the barracks? They can come give these guards a much needed vacation.” She smiled at one of the door guards.

“I don’t see why one guard can’t go with you. Take Frank, he fits in well with mortals,” he said as they walked up to the Durango.

“No”

Chevalier kissed Allen and buckled him into his car seat.

“What flight will you be on?” he asked.

“One going up high,” she said, and slid into the Durango.

“You aren’t going to even tell me your flight information?” he frowned.

“No and it’s good for you,” she said as he leaned in and hugged her tightly.

“I still can’t read you. I can’t follow your emotions or your feelings, it’s not safe,” he said, looking deep into her eyes.

“I will be back in 2 weeks,” she said, and kissed him softly. She pulled back, but he kissed her again passionately.

“Two weeks,” she promised, and then shut the door and drove off.

Chevalier watched with a heavy heart as they drove away. He couldn’t express to Emily how dangerous this idea was, and how much he hated how she left after having such a hard few weeks. Once the Durango was

out of sight, he went into the castle to see if he could find a way to pass the next two weeks.

“Sorry, Elder,” Kyle said.

“Two weeks,” he told Kyle.

“Want me to go or are you sending Mark?” he asked.

“I’m not sending anyone,” Chevalier said, snarling.

Kyle frowned, “No one?”

Chevalier shook his head, “Let’s see if we can work on those runes.”

Kyle nodded and followed the Elder down into the prison, Damon met them there. The three of them looked in at Vaughn.

“Can I help you?” Vaughn asked, smiling.

“We’ve come to talk about the runes on my wife,” Chevalier said, calmly.

“You mean my wife?” Vaughn asked, and leaned against the side of his cell.

“What is it going to take to get those off of her?” Chevalier ignored Vaughn’s last comment.

“There’s nothing that’s going to convince me to let go of my hold on the Winchester’s only heir,” Vaughn said.

“It won’t do you any good if you spend eternity in this cell,” Kyle said.

“We’ll see. I do enjoy hearing her scream in pain whenever I want,” Vaughn grinned.

“Why are you doing this? Why does it seem like more than just having a Winchester at your command?” Damon asked, curiously.

“I owe her a life of pain and humiliation for what she did to my faction. It’s my right to revenge, and I choose to take it out on her personally. You let her run around here like she’s in charge. As my wife, she will learn to be submissive, obedient, and respectful, as any mortal should be,” he said, proudly.

“Then you don’t know her very well. Emily doesn’t have a submissive bone in her body. She would end up just turning you all to ash again,” Kyle said, when Chevalier didn’t answer. Kyle didn’t see that Damon was restraining Chevalier behind him.

“Not when the rune fully works. Once that rune comes into full power, she will do whatever I say, whenever I say it, and she’ll do it with a bow,” he said, pleased.

“You underestimate her,” Kyle said. “We know what it will take to make that rune fully operational, and it’s not going to happen.”

“Enough pain will change anything. Even the most stubborn streak,” he said, sitting down on the bed in his cell.

“I see we’re at an impasse,” Damon said, and pushed Chevalier back toward the prison door.

“We’ll be back,” Kyle said.

“Tell Emily good-bye from me, I hope she has fun in New Mexico,” Vaughn called to them.

“We have to stop her, if he’s gotten a message to the Encala…” Chevalier blurred to the McLaren parked by his Humvee and roared the engine to life when Kyle sat down. He spun out and pulled quickly out of the garage and headed after Emily.

“We should pass her at this speed, keep your eyes out,” Chevalier said, topping the car’s speedometer.

“The Encala would have to know, he was too confident in how he said that,” Kyle said, watching out for the dark blue Durango.

Chevalier just scowled and wove in and out of traffic.

“What if she won’t come back with us?” Kyle asked.

“I don’t expect her to, I have…” Chevalier sighed, “A sedative.”

Kyle opened his eyes wide, “She’ll... she’ll not be happy.”

“I know, but she’ll be safe,” he said.

Chevalier pulled up to the valet at the airport and threw the keys at him. He and Kyle stepped into the airport, quickly, and looked toward the security check-in, the line was long. The estimated wait time listed on the board was 90 minutes.

“I’m not catching her scent,” Kyle said, looking around.

“She couldn’t have gotten through security. We had to have passed her,” Chevalier said, looking back toward the parking garage.

“We were both watching for that, traffic wasn’t that heavy.”

“Damnit, damnit, Emily,” Chevalier slammed his fist against the wall and turned around to block the hole in the wall with his body.

“What?”

“She went to the smaller airport, not the international. She would have known we’d check for her here,” Chevalier explained, angrily.

Kyle opened his cell phone and dialed, “Hello. When’s your next flight to Albuquerque, on any airline?”

Kyle frowned and slammed the phone down, “Only one airline flies to Albuquerque, it leaves in 15 minutes.”

“We can drive it,” Chevalier said.

“Think about it… what do we do when we get to her Uncle’s ranch?” Kyle asked.

“Bring her home.”

“Kicking and screaming?”

“If we have to,” he said.

Kyle turned and looked at him, “Maybe… we need to give her what she asked for.”

“And let the Encala have her?” Chevalier asked, shocked.

“Maybe it won’t happen. She can kill hundreds at once. They would be stupid to try to take her,” Kyle reminded him.

“Oooh let me see that baby!” Jess said, taking Allen into a bear hug. She pressed her lips hard against his cheeks and left smeared red lipstick, “He’s so beautiful!”

“Thanks, Jess,” Emily said, and hugged her uncle.

“It’s about time you came for a visit!” Alec smiled.

“Does someone have to get married to get you to visit?” Jess asked, and she put Allen down and hugged Emily tightly.

“I’m sorry, it’s been busy. How exciting that Pat is getting married,” Emily smiled and looked around the ranch. “Nothing’s changed.”

“Nuthin ‘cept you, Tiny.” Emily sighed and turned around to face Jeff.

“Hello, Jeff,” she said, politely.

“You’re holding up well, Short stuff,” he said smiling.

“Jeff, she’s married, go feed the cows.” Alec said, and picked up Emily’s bags. She followed them into the house. Emily stood at the counter and snapped green beans as she listened to her aunt talk about the wedding and Pat’s fiancé.

Emily was enjoying herself. Something as menial as making dinner was relaxing, and she was enjoying talking about little things. Allen was in

the front yard playing with the neighbor's 5-year-old son, and she was able to see him running and playing from the kitchen window.

"How are things with you?" Jess asked, wiping her hands on a towel.

"Same ol' same ol'," Emily said, smiling. "Boring life, ya know?"

"Yeah I do, how's that husband of yours? He's quite handsome," Jess said.

"He's good, probably enjoying some alone time." Emily began to blanch the beans.

"If he ever goes missing, Jeff talked about you for weeks after you left," Jess said, winking at Emily.

"Oh yay, I'll keep that in mind," Emily said, and laughed.

"We have a dress fitting in town at 7pm, is that ok?" her Aunt asked as she rifled through the fridge.

"Sure"

"Boys, come eat!" Jess yelled out the window. Emily started piling food onto the table. She smiled when she saw everyone sit down around the table and begin to eat and talk. She was finding it was the little things she missed.

After dinner, it was time for the fitting, so Emily kissed Allen good-bye and left him with Alec, then climbed into Jeff's truck. He was taking Jess and Emily into town because he had to go in for feed. Emily made sure and let Jess ride in the passenger seat beside Jeff.

"What ya been doing, Teeny?" Jeff asked, watching Emily in the rear-view mirror.

"Not much, hanging out with my husband and his guards," she said, grinning.

"Your husband has bodyguards?" he asked, frowning.

"Yes, lots of them," Emily couldn't help but chuckle.

"Didn't we tell you? He's an ambassador, right, Em?" Jess said.

Emily nodded.

The rest of the drive was in silence. Jeff grumbled a good-bye when he drove off from the church. Emily was surprised to have the fitting in a church, but the tailor was a member of their faith and offered the church.

"Go get dressed, I'll meet you there," Jess said, and Emily headed for the bathrooms.

She pulled the light pink dress out of the dressing bag and stripped, then slipped it on. She looked at her exposed back in the mirror and frowned. She looked at herself from the front, and shook her head, disappointed. Her sides were also exposed, and the dress was a little lower cut than she would normally wear. Taking a deep breath, Emily walked out with the others.

Emily cringed, there were three others in the exact same dress. One was close to 250 lbs, and the other two were both over sixty. She smiled when they made a fuss over how beautiful she looked in the dress, and then stood up on a table for her fitting. She could feel herself blush as everyone watched.

"Does the bride have something against backs?" Emily asked, as the woman pinned the hem and told her not to move.

"You're lucky that much is covered," the tailor said, disgusted. "The way she prances around town in that half shirt and short shorts, it's disgraceful."

Emily tried to ignore the argument that ensued and just thought about how wonderful all of this was. She missed some of the mundaneness of the mortal world, no attacks, no feedings, and no life threatening hidden passages.

“Ok, done,” the lady said when she’d finished with Emily’s dress. “I’ll have it ready by tomorrow night.”

Emily stepped down, careful not to disturb the pins, and ran back to the bathroom to change. There was another argument when she got back to the room. The tailor was trying to explain to the heavy-set maid of honor why she needed to wear a girdle, and the two older bridesmaids were talking about how bridesmaid dresses used to look.

Jess gave Emily a frantic look, and Emily put her hand on her stomach, “I think all the travel is making me sick.”

Jess’ eyes got wide, “Oh we should get you home, Dear.”

Jess called Jeff and told him they were ready to leave. It was only a few minutes later than Jess and Emily were in the truck, on their way back to the ranch.

“That was fun,” Emily said, after a few minutes of silence.

“Well, Pat’s fiancé is a little… well...” Jess tried to think of a good word.

“Flakey,” Jeff suggested.

“She’s not a flake.”

“She’s a women’s lib lovin’ flake,” Jeff said.

Emily smiled, “You need a girlfriend, then you wouldn’t be so hostile.”

“That an offer, Sweetheart?” he asked, looking in the rear-view mirror.

“In your dreams, Hoss.”

Emily hopped out of the truck when they got to the ranch and went in to check on Allen. Allen was sitting in Alec’s lap, and they were watching an old John Wayne movie together.

“How’d it go?” she asked, kissing Allen on the cheek.

“Your son has quite the imagination,” Alec said. “So I decided to show him some real heroes. No more of these… what do you call them?”

“Heku,” Allen said, watching the movie intently.

“It’s just a phase, I’m sure,” Emily said, and went into the kitchen to help clean up. Jess made a fresh pot of coffee and she and Emily sat down to visit. Alec came in a short time later with Allen asleep in his arms.

“I think he’s had enough of the Duke,” Alec said, handing Allen over to Emily.

She kissed his cheek, “We’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Sounds good, why don’t you bring some eggs in when you come,” Jess said, smiling.

Emily nodded and headed out to the old bunkhouse where she used to live. Emily changed both of them and curled up next to Allen on the bed. She soon fell asleep to the sounds of cows in the pasture.

Emily woke up to the rooster and looked over at Allen, he was still fast asleep. She got up, dressed quickly, and walked out to the chicken coop. She gathered the eggs into the basket and checked on Allen, he was coloring in bed. Once he was dressed, they headed into the house. They could smell breakfast from outside, and Emily smiled.

"Good morning," Emily said, handing Jess the basket of eggs. Allen ran into Alec's outstretched arms.

"Hope you're hungry," Jess said, flipping pancakes on the griddle.

"Starving, what can I do?" Emily asked, and started cracking open the fresh eggs for scrambled eggs.

As soon as breakfast was over, Jess looked at her watch and gasped, "Emily! We're going to be late for the makeovers."

"Makeover?" Emily grimaced.

"Oh come on, it's not going to hurt you to be made up for once," Jess laughed.

"I'll bring Allen along later," Alec said, sitting down to color with Allen.

Emily nodded and followed Jess out to the car. They crawled in and rode silently into town. Emily cringed when she saw the beautician assigned to her. She had blue and pink striped hair and rings in her nose and eyebrows. Her make-up was heavy black, and she had a blue tear tattooed on her cheek.

Emily decided to just endure it and sat back to listen to Jess visit with other members of the wedding party.

“Don’t forget, Jennifer, hair up,” the owner said to the girl doing Emily’s hair.

“Can’t I wear it down? It’ll cover my back,” she said.

Jess shook her head, “Bride’s order, hair has to be up.”

Emily nodded.

“What colors of make-up do you want?” the girl asked Emily.

“Nothing dark,” Emily said, eyeing the beautician’s black eye shadow.

Emily watched for three hours as the beautician curled her hair and intricately piled it on top of her head with coiled tendrils falling softly down on her shoulders. She was impressed that her make-up was very light and natural looking.

“Come on, Emi, we have to get dressed,” Jess said, frantically.

She went along with Jess. She knew they had plenty of time, but her Aunt was frenzied and nervous. In the car, Jess babbled about people who were coming, and those that couldn’t make it. She was nervous about meeting the bride’s mother and kept referring to them as ‘new age’ parents.

Emily hurried and got dressed. The bathroom was full of last minute fittings and make-over adjustments. It didn’t take her long to get dressed. The dress didn’t allow for a lot of work, not even a bra was an option with the backless creation. She pulled on the pink heels and walked out of the hectic bathroom, hoping to find Allen.

Emily found Allen and Alec sitting alone in a room off of the main church lobby. She slunk into a chair and picked Allen up.

“Pretty scary, isn’t it?” Alec said, smiling.

“Yeah, not really my thing,” Emily shrugged.

“We appreciate you coming. We don’t have a lot of family and Pat wanted as many in the wedding as possible,” Alec explained.

Emily nodded, “It’s ok, it was a good excuse to come visit.”

“Emily!” Jess yelled.

“I better go,” Emily said, checking to make sure Allen’s tie was on straight.

Emily was lined up behind the maid of honor and handed a small bouquet of pink roses and white carnations. She smiled as Allen ran down the aisle with the ring and into Alec’s arms.

Emily was glad for her quaint bonding ceremony. She didn’t have to go through all of this with Chevalier like she had with Keith. She marched slowly down the aisle and blushed as she felt eyes on her exposed back. She took her place alongside the bride and looked out over those gathered.

One man caught her eye. He was watching her closely and smiled when she looked at him. Emily couldn’t help but blush, even when their eyes met he didn’t look away. She didn’t catch most of the ceremony. She spent her time trying to look at anyone but the dark haired stranger who was watching her. Once the ceremony was over, she walked with the others into the reception area where there was to be a dance.

“Allen is tired. I’m going to take him back to the ranch,” Alec said when he found Emily.

“Coward,” she called to him.

“Yes I am,” Alec said, grinning, and then left with Allen.

The music started and Emily watched the couple take their first dance together.

“Come on, Small Fry, let’s dance.” She flinched at the voice.

“No thanks, Jeff, I don’t dance,” she said, but he took her hand anyway and dragged her onto the dance floor.

She felt his rough hand on the skin on her waist, and he took her other hand.

Jeff’s dancing was uncoordinated and clunky, and she had to fight to stay on her feet in the awful pink heels. She was relieved when she heard the voice behind her.

“May I cut in, please?” the soft and tender voice said.

Jeff huffed and let Emily go. She turned and saw the tall, dark haired stranger that had been watching her earlier.

Emily tried not to panic when she felt his hand against her back, and she took his other hand in hers. He spun her, and then pressed her body close to his.

“I didn’t catch your name,” he said, looking down at her.

“Emily, and yours?”

“I’m Exavior,” he said, smiling. Emily froze when she saw the elongated canines.

He bent down and whispered into her ear, “I’m not here to hurt you.”

He spun her around and brought her back close to his body.

“Who are you?” she asked, anxiously.

“I’m just here for the wedding, the same as you,” he said to her, calmly.

“What faction?” she asked, and he dipped her and looked into her eyes.

“No factions tonight,” he said, and lifted her back up.

“I’m warning you…”

“Relax.” He spun her again and pressed her against him using his hand on her back, “I’m just surprised you are here unprotected is all.”

“I can handle myself,” she whispered.

He laughed, “I’ve heard that.”

“It’s not fair that you know who I am, and I don’t know anything about you,” she said, looking around her for an easy out.

“Haven’t you heard? Life isn’t fair,” he chuckled.

Emily’s body tensed when she felt his nose close to her neck.

“You’re a jumpy little thing aren’t you? I’m not going to hurt you,” he said again. Both of them turned and clapped when the band ended the song, and Emily made a break for the door.

She stepped out quickly into the night air and took a deep breath.

“So how long are you here for?” she heard him ask from beside her.

She jumped, “If you aren’t going to hurt me, then why are you following me?”

“You’re an attractive woman and seems to me, you’re here alone,” he said, matter-of-factly.

“I’m married,” she said.

“Oh, I know,” he said, then grinned.

Emily tried to go back inside, but he grabbed her wrist.

“Don’t go,” he said.

“What faction are you?” Emily asked, crossing her arms.

“Why do we have to play the faction game tonight?” he asked her.

“Because if you’re Equites, then you have some explaining to do. If you’re Valle or Encala, then I’ll be on my way,” she told him.

“That’s why I won’t say. Why can’t we suffer through this nightmare together?” he asked, motioning in to the reception.

“One wrong move…” she warned him.

He raised an eyebrow, “Understood.”

They went back into the reception and Exavior got Emily some punch. He saw Jeff heading toward them and pulled Emily back out onto the dance floor.

“I think Cowboy likes you,” he said, pulling her close to him.

Emily looked to the side and saw Jeff watching them.

“I guess.” She turned back to Exavior.

“Hmm,” Exavior said, glancing at Jeff. He dipped Emily again, and pressed his lips lightly to hers. She gasped and tried to push him away, but he held her tightly. When he let her back up, she glared at him.

“What was that?” she growled.

“Showing Cowpoke who’s in charge here,” Exavior chuckled.

“No one’s in charge of me,” she said, trying to push away. Exavior used her momentum to spin her and then brought her back against his chest.

“It’s instinctual, we heku like to mark our territory. Tell your husband he owes me one,” Exavior said, smiling.

“I’m sure he’d be glad to hear it,” she mumbled.

“Oh cheer up. It was just a little kiss and it worked,” he told her, amused.

Emily glanced at Jeff and saw him at the bar, drinking.

As Emily and Exavior walked off the dance floor, Jess ran up to them.

“Oh I’m so glad you’ve met!” Jess said, smiling at them. “Emily, this is Exavior, he’s a friend of the family and he’s staying in the bunkhouse by yours.”

Emily faked a smile and nodded, “Great.”

She could feel Exavior chuckle and she stepped away from him further.

“I’m going to be here all night, so Exavior offered to take you home when you’re ready,” Jess said, and ran off to talk to someone.

“Nice of you,” she said to him.

“Just the gentlemanly thing to do. I could let Jeff take you home,” he said, watching Jeff take a shot of whiskey.

“I’m ready to go,” she said, grabbing the bag with her clothes.

“After you.”

Emily stepped out into the cold air and wrapped her hands around to cover her arms.

“Why is it that mortals never wear weather appropriate clothing?” he asked, handing her his jacket.

Emily ripped it out of his hand and tossed it over her shoulder, “I didn’t exactly pick this dress.”

He looked at her and raised an eyebrow, “You should wear it more often.”

“Yes, it would look great in Council City,” she said, stopping at the jacked-up Ford F450.

Exavior opened the truck door for her, put his hands on her waist, and lifted her into the truck.

“I could have gotten in,” she said, indignantly.

“Sure you could have.”

Emily suddenly thought how furious Chevalier would be with her right now. She was getting into a truck with a strange, factionless heku.

Exavior easily jumped into the truck, “I should call Chevalier and tell him.”

“Tell him what?” she asked, frowning.

“That you are in a truck with a strange heku.” He laughed.

Her eyes narrowed, “You wouldn’t.”

“You’re right, I wouldn’t,” he said, then turned on the heater and pulled out into traffic. “You really should be more careful though.”

Emily was relieved when they arrived at the ranch and he turned off the engine. She hopped out of the truck, almost twisting her ankle when she landed. She steadied herself and went into the house to get Allen.

“Good night, Emily,” Exavior called as he walked into his bunkhouse.

Emily took Allen, who was sleeping on the couch, and went to her bunkhouse. She locked the door, changed into a nightshirt, and laid down. She thought she would be up all night worrying about Exavior, but soon fell asleep.

Emily woke up later than usual and panicked when she didn’t see Allen. She ran out into the light rain still wearing just a t-shirt and looked around quickly.

“Alec took him inside,” Exavior said, watching her from his doorway.

Emily nodded and ran back into the dry cabin. She wasn’t sure, but she thought she could hear Exavior laughing. She came out a short time later and ran into the house.

“Good morning, Em,” Jess said from the table. Emily poured herself a cup of coffee and sat down.

“So you survived,” Emily said.

“Yeah barely. Her parents are a disaster, all love PETA and ban guns,” she said with disgusted.

“But he loves her,” Emily said, stating the obvious.

“Yeah he does.”

After a few minutes of silence, Jess tapped her forehead, “I almost forgot. I hope you don’t mind, but I promised Exavior you would take him out horseback later. He’s never been on a horse.”

Emily felt panicked, “You sure? Jeff could take him, and I can help around the house.”

“Oh I wouldn’t think of it! If you’re both going to be here for the next ten days, you might as well keep entertained,” Jess said, watching the morning news.

Emily finished her coffee and looked out the window at the sun coming through the clouds.

“Rain stopped, you should go before it starts again,” Jess said.

Allen ran to Emily, “Mommy? Are you going out with the heku?”

Emily pressed her lips to his ear and hushed him, “Shhhhh baby, we don’t talk about heku here remember?”

He nodded, “Sorry.”

Emily put him down and he ran to Alec, they had become inseparable.

Emily walked out of the house and saw Exavior leaning up against the barn door, “Half expected you to bail on me.”

“Hey, Fun Size, you going riding?” Jeff asked from behind her. She saw Exavior tense.

“Yes, I’m taking Exavior out for a bit,” she said, not turning around. Emily jumped when she felt Jeff pat her butt softly.

“Keep your hands off,” she scowled at him.

“Sure thing, Tiny,” he said, laughing, and walked off toward the cattle.

Exavior raised an eyebrow, “Does an Elder for the Equites allow that?”

“He doesn’t know,” she said, tossing a bridle to Exavior. “I can handle myself.”

“Sure, you handled that well.” He laughed.

She pointed to a saddle, “Bring that.”

Exavior lifted the saddle one-handed and followed her. She found a calm mare and slipped a bridle on it.

Emily took the saddle from Exavior even though he protested, “I can do that.”

“So can I,” she said, hoisting the saddle onto the mare. She finished with the mare and went out to find her a horse. She found a beautiful buckskin stallion and slipped a bridle on him, and then jumped up onto his back.

When she led the stallion out, Exavior was waiting for her on the mare, “Why do I have to have a saddle?”

“Because I don’t feel like scraping you off the ground,” she said, clicking her tongue and leading both horses out of the barn.

When they were clear of the fences, Emily turned to Exavior.

“You better hold on,” she said, grinning, and slapped his mare on the rump, which sent her into a gallop. Emily kicked her stallion into a gallop and easily caught up. She smiled at the way Exavior struggled to stay on the horse.

The day passed quickly, and Emily found that she was becoming more and more comfortable with the strange heku. They rode back to the ranch just as the sun was setting.

Emily jumped off the stallion and visited with Exavior while she unsaddled his mare and got both horses food and water. They walked back into the house together.

“Bout time you two show up, you must be starving,” Jess said, as she shoveled piles of shepherd’s pie onto two plates.

Emily took her plate from Jess and watched as Exavior accepted his plate. They sat at the table together and Emily took a bite, watching the heku. He smiled at her and took a bite of the shepherd’s pie.

Emily frowned as he laughed and ate another bite.

She ate quietly until Allen crawled up onto the table. He looked at Exavior oddly.

“Mommy he’s eating,” Allen said.

Emily put her hand over his mouth, “Another shhhh.”

Allen nodded, but watched Exavior eat.

They both finished their plates and Emily took them to the sink, and started to wash them. Exavior sat Allen on his lap and watched her. Her heart jumped when she saw Allen on the heku’s lap.

“Get down,” she told him, and he crawled down sadly, and then went into the living room.

“Be nice, Emily. I wasn’t hurting him,” he said.

The next week was spent out on horseback every day. Sometimes with Allen, and sometimes without, but always with Exavior. Emily was becoming more and more comfortable with him, and they were now talking more in-depth about the heku life.

“I don’t know how you do it, they must watch you like a hawk,” he said, smiling.

“Sometimes, yes.”

“Sometimes?”

“Ok, so most of the time, yes,” she admitted.

“Ever tell them to take a hike?” he asked.

“How do you think I’m away from them for two weeks? Well away from my heku, seems I can’t get away all together,” she laughed.

“Sorry to ruin your vacation,” he said, kicking his mare into a gallop. Emily did the same and soon they were racing across the north pasture.

“You aren’t, I’m having fun,” she said.

“Tomorrow you’re on your own. I need to… well… go out,” he said, shrugging.

“Time to feed, eh?” she asked.

“Yeah,” he said, amazed at how casually she talked about it.

They pulled their horses into the barn just after dark, and each got their own horse settled down for the night.

“Heading in?” Emily asked him.

“Nope, I’ll be back tomorrow afternoon,” he said, chuckling, and climbed into the Ford.

Emily waved to him and went into the house.

The next morning, the sun was shining and Emily dressed her and Allen quickly, and they went into the main house. Jess was just finishing pancakes when Emily sat the eggs down.

“Seems like you’re on your own today,” Jess told Emily as she gave her some pancakes.

“Seems so,” she said, and started to eat.

“We wondered if we could take Allen into town and buy him a late birthday present,” Alec asked.

Emily smiled, “Sure, just not too much.”

She watched as they left and then looked out the window of the kitchen toward the barn. Smiling, Emily walked out to the barn and pulled a bridle onto the buckskin stallion. She kicked him immediately into a gallop and jumped the first gate, heading deeper into the north pasture. She shut her eyes and listened to the sounds of the wind through the threes and the little stream that ran along the property line.

Emily heard the rattle moments before she felt the stallion jerk. She gripped tighter with her legs and held on as the stallion broke into a panicked run from the snake. Emily fought to regain control by pulling on the reins, but the horse overcorrected and reared back. She fell off and landed hard against the ground, hitting her head on a rock.

Emily could feel the world spin as she rolled over onto her knees. She felt the blood dripping down the back of her neck and looked over at the horse.

“You ok?” she heard Jeff yell as he jumped off of his horse.

“I’m fine,” she lied, and tried to stand up. Her legs gave out and she ended up in Jeff’s arms, so he put her back onto the ground.

“Damn rattler, I couldn’t catch up with your horse,” he said, irritated. Jeff felt along the back of her head and cringed when he felt the gash.

“I’m ok, really,” she said, sitting up.

“Well,” Jeff said, adjusting his cowboy hat. “I guess if you say so, Tiny.”

Emily felt a panic when he dropped his caring attitude and picked up his usual patronizing tone.

“You know we have the entire ranch to ourselves,” Jeff said, leaning closer to her.

Emily turned onto her hands and knees and tried to get away, but he caught her ankle and pulled her back to him.

“Where you going, Half-Pint?” he asked, taking her wrists in his hands.

“Get away from me,” she said to him, sternly.

“I love a gal with fire,” he said, and kissed her roughly. Emily turned her head to the side to get away from him, but he just started kissing her neck.

“Get away,” she said again, and tried to kick him.

He trapped her legs under his and lay down against her, his body weight crushing her, “Been waiting for this, haven’t you?”

She tried to yell, but found his mouth pressed against hers again. She struggled to get out from under him, but couldn’t move against his body weight. He had her hands trapped above her head with one of his.

“Stop fighting me. You might enjoy it,” he said, pulling her shirt up and over her head.

“Get off!” she screamed, but felt his hands at her waist undoing her jeans.

With one quick movement, Jeff managed to slide off of her and pull off her jeans as she fought against him.

“Damn, you’re hot,” he said, crawling back on top of her. He used his knees to separate her legs.

“Jeff, don’t do this,” she said, and tried to bite him.

“I bite back, Tiny,” he told her, reaching one hand down to undo his pants.

Emily’s body shook with fear and she struggled to get out from underneath him. She screamed angrily when she couldn’t move him. She jumped slightly when she heard the growl and felt Jeff being pulled off of her. She watched, wide eyed, as Exavior threw Jeff against the ground and jumped on him, clutching his hand to the mortal’s neck.

Emily scrambled to her feet, grabbed her shirt, and ran for the trees. Her jeans were too close to the fight. She ran until the sound of fighting was behind her, slipping her t-shirt back on as she ran. She looked back over her shoulder and screamed when she ran into someone.

Emily kicked and screamed at him in a panic.

“Emily, it’s me… you’re ok,” Exavior said, and pulled her close to him. She buried her face in his chest, shaking.

“It’s ok,” he said, rubbing her back.

“Jeff,” she whispered.

“He had a bad fall from a horse,” Exavior said, furiously. “Don’t worry, he’s sort of alive.”

Emily's body shook as he held her, but she could feel the anger emanating from him. He picked her up and cradled her in his arms, then blurred back toward the ranch. Emily felt the wind through her hair at his speed and just held onto him. He sat her down in her bunkhouse and shut the door behind them.

Emily pulled out her suitcase and threw on some jeans, blushing.

"He's lucky I didn't kill him," Exavior said, coldly.

Emily just nodded, "Thank you."

Exavior smiled at her when he saw the tears start and pulled her close to him, "No wonder you married a heku, you need a lot of help."

She was too upset to argue with him. When she stopped trembling, he let her go.

"Now let me look at your head," he said, and she moved a step away from him.

"I'm ok."

"If I were going to feed off of you, I wouldn't have waited this long. Now come here," he said, and blurred behind her. He felt through her hair and sighed.

“You probably should go to the Emergency room for stitches, let’s go,” he told her, opening the door.

“I’m fine,” she said, afraid.

“Come on or I’ll call the Equites,” he chuckled.

She glared at him and walked out, even allowing him to lift her into the truck.

They didn’t get back until late at night, and an ambulance was just pulling away. Emily jumped out of the truck and ran into the house.

“Allen?!” she yelled.

Allen ran to her and she picked him up and hugged him tightly, “Alec? Jess?” she called.

“We’re here, Emily. The ambulance just took Jeff away. He was in a horrible horse accident. It stepped on his back, and… well right now Jeff can’t feel anything below the waist,” Jess said, sadly.

Emily nodded and held Allen tighter.

Exavior stepped in, “Bad day on the ranch, we just got back from the Emergency Room.”

Emily glared at him.

“What happened?” Jess gasped.

“Emily’s horse saw a rattlesnake. She hit a rock when he bucked her,” Exavior explained.

“You found her?” Alec asked, frowning.

“Yeah, I got home early and decided to catch up with her on horseback,” he lied.

Jess hugged him, “I’m so glad you were there for her.”

Emily looked out over the doors to the terminal and then back to Exavior, “Thank you for the ride.”

He smiled, “Any time.”

“Are you going to tell me your faction now?” she asked, glancing nervously at Allen.

Exavior laughed, “I’m Valle.”

She nodded and opened her door. He blurred to her side and helped her out, then got Allen out of the car seat.

“Here’s my phone number, in case you ever need anything,” Exavior said, handing her a card with his name and number.

He grinned and hugged her, “Take care of yourself.”

She pulled away from him and smiled, “Thanks again, I’ll call you sometime, ok?”

He nodded and crawled back into the truck.

The flight home was uneventful, and she was glad to be back. She found her Durango easily and buckled Allen into his seat. He was asleep before they got out of the airport parking area, and she took the road that led back to the palace.

Emily pulled into the garage and cut the engine. She heard the door open before she even got the key out. Chevalier pulled her out of the car and hugged her tightly.

“I missed you,” he said, kissing her before she could answer.

He sat her down and smiled.

“I missed you, too,” she said, hugging him. She laid her head against his chest.

“Did you have a good time?” he asked.

Emily nodded, “I did. How was it here?”

“Boring,” Chevalier said, and laughed.

“Daddy!” Allen screamed, and Chevalier got him out of the car seat. Allen threw his arms around Chevalier’s neck and bear hugged him.

“Missed you kiddo,” he said, and grabbed the suitcases with his other hand, carrying Allen inside.

Emily looked around the foyer, everything seemed the same. She’d been gone what felt like an eternity and was surprised nothing had changed.

“Em!” Kyle said, running down the stairs. He picked her up in a bear hug, “Welcome back!”

“Can’t... breathe…” Emily gasped, and laughed when he set her down.

“Sorry,” Kyle said, grinning.

“You sure you weren’t enjoying the peace and quiet?” Emily asked.

“It wasn’t peaceful and quiet… it was boring and dull,” Kyle said.

Emily turned to one of the random guards stationed throughout the palace, “Was it not a little less stressful without me here?”

He looked at Chevalier, nervously.

“That answered that,” she said, grinning, and patted the guard on the shoulder.

Chevalier dropped their bags onto the bed and she started to put things away.

“So, what did you do?” Chevalier asked, casually.

“Well… went to the wedding, which was nice, and the reception, which was awful,” she said, going through Allen’s bag.

“What was wrong with it?”

“It was a dance,” she laughed. “Don’t worry, I only danced with Jeff once and someone cut-in and saved the day.”

“Oh good, I kept waiting for you to bring him back with you,” Chevalier laughed.

“Other than that, I spent most of the time on horseback, did some cooking, some cleaning, the same things I used to do,” she said, sliding the empty suitcases under the bed.

“Fun,” he said.

“Actually, it was kind of nice.” She sat down by him.

Sam swept into the room and pulled Allen into a bear hug, “I got you something, come on.”

Sam and Allen left the room and Emily smiled after them.

“Allen and Uncle Alec really hit it off, they were inseparable. He would even cry when I forced him to go out with me on a ride,” Emily said, crossing her legs on the bed.

Chevalier nodded and looked at her.

“What?” she asked when she saw the look on his face.

“You know I have to ask… I wasn’t going to…” he said, rubbing the back of his neck.

“What did I do now?” she asked.

“Where are you hurt?”

Emily started to laugh, “My God you have a sensitive nose, that’s days old.”

He shrugged, “So?”

“My horse saw a rattlesnake. I hit my head on a rock when I fell and got some stitches… easy enough,” she said, leaving out most of the details.

“Hmm.” He watched her.

“Oh come on, you can’t be upset about that. I’ve …” she said, but was cut off when Chevalier kissed her. She wrapped her arms around his neck and pushed him down on the bed.

“What’s Sam showing Allen?” Emily asked, curled up next to Chevalier.

“We’ve been working with Damnit while you were gone, and Sam says he’s ready to be given to Allen. I got a saddle that should fit him,” Chevalier said, and kissed her shoulder.

“Oh he’ll love that!” Emily said, smiling.

“I think we should rename him.”

“No way, it fits,” Emily smirked.

“Are you sure nothing happened… erm… out of the ordinary in New Mexico?” he asked.

“No, why?”

“Just curious is all.”

Emily rolled over and propped herself up on one elbow. “Ok then… I was attacked by 5 million Encala and 6 million Valle at the same time. They saw my infinitely good looks and began a mass war between themselves, wiping out most of the population of the western United States.”

“Ha-ha, very funny,” Chevalier laughed.

“How about… I met a very nice Valle heku and we spent most of the time horseback riding,” she said, smiling.

“Nice… ok, ok, so nothing happened.” He grinned and got up.

“Hmm,” Emily said, watching him.

Chevalier turned, “What?”

Emily shrugged.

“What?” he asked again, sitting on the bed.

Emily grinned, “I wasn’t done cuddling.”

“I have to go back to work, and you should go touch base with Damon on the Cavalry training. There are ten of them now, so he could use the help,” Chevalier said, getting dressed.

Emily frowned, “Why Damon? Oh, why ten?”

“Damon because Kyle has been busy. Ten because we reinstated your three bar fighting companions, and decided to keep the three we had replaced them with, just in case.”

“Just in case what?”

“Just in case you ever agree to a guard again,” he said, and left the room.

“Good luck with that!” she yelled after him and then grinned. “Hey Damon! I’m back!”

She heard Chevalier chuckle from the hallway.

Emily threw on some jeans and a t-shirt, pulled on her cowboy boots and grabbed her riding gloves, then went out to the stable.

She saw the new recruits lined up on the lawn facing one another. They were all mid-fight in pairs when she walked up.

“You don’t have to yell to talk to me,” Damon said, watching his guards.

“Yeah but that way I make sure you hear me.” She watched them fight.

“Oh you’re pretty hard to ignore.” He smirked.

“Missed me didn’t you?” She grinned.

“Like a hole in the head.” He yelled at two of the guards and walked over to them.

Emily shook her head and went into the stables. She checked all of the horses and was pleased they all had clean stalls and fresh food and water. She grabbed a bridle and the cattle prod, and slipped the bridle onto Chevalier’s Arabian stallion. She hoisted herself up onto the crabby horse and walked him out of the stable and over to Damon.

Damon looked over at her and eyed the cattle prod, “Isn’t that the Elder’s horse.”

“Yes, and he needs to learn some manners,” she said, grabbing the cattle prod. She grinned when Damon took a step away from her, “Like some others around here.”

He raised an eyebrow, “Touch me with that thing and I won’t be held responsible.”

“Enough rolling around on the ground, get on your horses,” Emily said, loudly. The recruits all blurred into the stables.

“I’ll stay on the ground,” he said when she watched him.

“Your call, have they even been on the horses? The three new guys?” she asked.

“Nope,” he said.

“You aren’t afraid of a horse are you?”

He glared up at her and walked toward the stable.

Emily sighed when the new recruits came out, leading their horses.

“Get on them,” she said, “From the left.”

She watched as the seven previous recruits mounted their horses easily, and then giggled slightly when the three new ones struggled a bit. Once they were all seated, she nodded.

“Good, now we go for a ride. We’ll take it easy and go through the city streets, get used to the feel of being on a horse.”

Emily clicked her tongue and sighed when the Arabian didn’t move. She tried again, and he snorted back towards her.

“Where’s Patra?” Frank asked.

“She’s ok, I just need to teach this guy some etiquette is all. He’s Chevalier’s pesky horse.” She grabbed the cattle prod from the saddlebag and kicked the horse.

Emily touched the cattle prod quickly to his rump. He bucked once, and then walked off slowly.

“There we go,” she grinned.

The previous recruits visited with her about her trip to New Mexico while the three new ones held back by themselves. Emily turned around once in a while to check on them. She finally slowed down and let them catch up.

“Let me guess… you aren’t mortal fans?” she asked, and watched as they glanced nervously at one another.

“No, Ma’am, we aren’t,” one of them said finally.

“Good to know. I’ll leave you alone, you leave me alone, and we’ll get through this without any deaths… deal?”

They nodded at her.

“Do try to keep up, though.” She grinned and kicked the Arabian into a gallop.

Emily grabbed tightly to the reins, he took off faster than Patra normally did. She blew past the other guards, who took the challenge and also kicked their horses into a gallop. The three new guards did the same, but couldn’t seem to catch up to her.

She laughed when she got back to the stables first.

“The Elder would like you to go to his office,” Damon told her.

Emily slid off of the Arabian and handed the reins to Damon, “Take care of him, please.”

He glowered, but led the horse into the stables.

Emily knocked on Chevalier's office door and slipped off her gloves as she walked in and sat down.

"You rang?" Emily asked. She frowned when she saw his face.

Chevalier pushed something toward her, "I got a receipt of payment from the hospital in New Mexico, apparently, when you left, you forgot to grab it."

Emily nodded, "Ok, thanks." She took the receipt. She couldn't remember paying it, though, and her breath caught when she saw the signature at the bottom, it was Exavior's.

"I'm going to try to keep my temper under control…" he said, rubbing his temples.

"There's no reason to get mad." She tucked the receipt into her pocket.

"I'm afraid I already know the answer… but who, is Exavior?" he asked, slowly.

"He's a friend of Alec and Jess. He was at the reception and stayed with them," she said.

"And his species?"

"Is not important," she said, readying herself for a fight.

“Is he the one that cut into your dance with Jeff then?” He looked up at her.

She nodded and noticed Chevalier’s hands were shaking.

“What part of danger are you not getting here?” he asked, gritting his teeth.

“There was no danger. It was a dance, and I didn’t even know he was heku until he’d already cut in and we were visiting. I must have left my heku radar in my other jacket,” she scowled.

“Did he tell you he was an Equites?”

“He wouldn’t tell me his faction until he’d dropped me off at the airport,” Emily shut her mouth quickly and cringed. She hadn’t meant for him to know that.

“You were alone in his car?” Chevalier’s eyes became furious.

“I’m not going to talk about this,” she said, and stood up.

“Sit… down…” he demanded.

Emily turned on her heels and walked out of his office, heading up the stairs.

“Emily,” Kyle called and then blurred to her side. “What’s up? You look mad.”

“Get away, Kyle,” Chevalier said angrily from behind them.

Kyle turned around, wide eyed, and stepped away from them. He whispered under his breath, “Control.”

Chevalier spun to him, “Oh? Let’s see how well you can control yourself… Emily, tell Kyle who took you to the airport.”

Emily turned at the top of the stairs and glared at Chevalier, “It was no big deal.”

“So tell him, see what Kyle thinks,” he said, taking a step up.

Kyle looked at her suspiciously “What’s going on?”

“He’s just freaking out because I let Exavior drive me to the airport, and before he chimes in, we danced too… oh and spent two weeks horseback riding,” she added, and stormed into her room.

Kyle stood, wide eyed, “The Valle Exavior?”

Chevalier growled and followed her into the room, slamming the door behind him.

“What do you mean you spent two weeks riding horseback with him? How often were you two alone?” Chevalier hissed.

“A lot,” she said, crossing her arms.

“If you were heku, I’d tear your head off for treason,” he growled, stepping toward her, his hands balled into fists.

“Treason? What, you think I was out there telling him Equites secrets? We’re friends… nothing more” she scowled.

“Valle aren’t friends, they are our enemies. You’re lucky you aren’t chained up in a Valle prison right now.”

“Ha! He didn’t even talk to me about the Valle and he had plenty of opportunities to snag me if he’d wanted to. He… is... my... friend,” she yelled.

Chevalier took her arm roughly and pulled her to face him, “What part of this are you not seeing the danger in? You cannot be friends with a Valle.”

“You’re hurting my arm.” She glared at him.

“Good, maybe it’ll sink into your thick head that heku are dangerous.”

“Let go,” she demanded.

Chevalier pushed her onto the bed, roughly, “You are confined to quarters until I decide what to do with you.”

“Oh no, I’m not. I’m not one of your subjects, and you can’t order me around.” She stood up and faced him, but took a step back when she saw his body shake with anger.

“You were fraternizing with a member of the Valle Council… a dangerous member of the Valle Council, and you will learn one way or another, how to avoid that in the future.” He walked toward the door.

“Fraternizing? You sound like we were playing slap and tickle. We’re friends, nothing more,” she said, rubbing her arm.

He turned to her, “You will not be friends with him.”

“Oh, ok Keith.” She glared.

Chevalier blurred to her and pinned her to the wall with his hand around her neck, her feet dangled over a foot from the floor.

“Do not compare me to him,” he growled.

Emily couldn’t breathe. She clawed at his fingers and kicked out at him.

“You will not be friends with Exavior,” he said again, gritting his teeth.

Emily could feel pain in her lungs as she tried to inhale. She saw blackness creep across her vision.

“Emily?” she heard the soft voice from far away. Her lungs hurt and her head was pounding.

“Come on, Emily, look at me,” she heard again, and she was finally able to open her eyes and look up at Kyle.

Emily gasped in a breath and sat up suddenly, her hands at her throat. She looked around the room anxiously.

“He’s not here, Maleth has him downstairs,” Kyle said. Emily noticed that his voice held an air of irritation.

Emily crawled out of bed and went into the bathroom. She looked at the deep purple bruises around her neck.

“Can you blame him?” Kyle asked, watching her.

Emily spun around to him, “Yes, I can. I did nothing wrong.”

“You hung around with one of the most dangerous members of the Valle Council, the Chief Interrogator,” he said, seething.

“I didn’t know who he was, and he was nothing but polite and friendly.” She walked out into the bedroom. Emily looked around and grabbed her phone, then headed toward the door.

“The Elders have asked that I keep you in here,” he said to her, blocking the door.

She glared at him, “Get out.”

“Fine, but I’m watching you,” he said, leaving her room and slamming the door behind him.

Emily was out the window within seconds, scaling down the side of the building like she’d done before. She checked around her and ran for the stables. Once inside, she climbed up into the loft and hid behind a stack of hay. She dialed the number with shaking fingers.

“Yes?” the gruff voice said.

She couldn’t answer. Suddenly, she was wracked with fear.

“Who is this?” he questioned, irritated.

“Exavior?” she finally managed to ask.

“Emily?” he said, concerned. His voice was no longer stern.

“He knows,” she said, her eyes filling with tears.

There was a pause, “Are you ok? Did he hurt you?”

Emily nodded, knowing he couldn’t see it.

“I wanted to warn you,” she said finally, trying to control the fear in her voice.

“Warn me? Emily, are you hurt?” he asked again, quickly.

“Yes,” she whispered, feeling the ache in her neck.

“I’ll come get you, are you in Council City?” he asked.

“No, don’t come, he’ll kill you,” she said, suddenly.

“I have diplomatic immunity. He can’t touch me,” Exavior growled.

“Stay there, but be careful. He…” The phone was ripped roughly from her hands.

“Stay away from my wife,” she heard Chevalier hiss into the phone.

Exavior was yelling loud enough that Emily could hear him through the phone, “Why, so you can kill her? Feel good beating up a mortal a third your size?”

“You don’t know who you are messing with,” Chevalier scowled.

“I think I do. I’m talking to a creature that has no problems assaulting his mortal wife,” Exavior said, angrily.

“Leave her alone,” Chevalier said again.

“You first,” he yelled.

“She’s none of your concern, Valle,” he hissed.

“Yes she is. She’s my friend and if she needs my help, she’ll get it.”

“She’s taken care of here. She doesn’t need you,” Chevalier said, his eyes narrowing.

“Taken care of? Not only is she injured right now, but you’ve left that Encala rune on her. Why is that exactly?” Exavior roared.

“How did you see that?” Chevalier asked, and slammed the phone against the wall when Exavior hung up.

Chevalier pulled Emily to her feet by her arm and shook her, “How did the Valle see the runes on your thigh?”

“Stop it,” she said, as he slammed her into the wall.

“How?”

Chevalier let Emily go when Leonid and Maleth appeared behind him, and Leonid put a hand on his shoulder, “Let her go.”

He glared at her, “How did he see it?”

“It’s not what you think,” she said, moving back into the corner.

“Tell me.” Chevalier stepped toward her.

“Stay away from me. I’m warning you,” she said, glaring at him. “I’ve let you go too far this time, and I’m not letting any more slide.”

“Or what?” he scowled. Maleth and Leonid both gasped when Chevalier suddenly fell into a pile of ash. Emily ran past them and scrambled down the ladder. She heard a faint voice in the wind call for Damon.

Kyle grabbed her just as she headed into the garage. He was holding her wrist gently, “This time… I’ll stay with you.”

He led her up the stairs and into the bedroom, “Elder’s orders, you stay here, and Chevalier stays away from you.”

“If Damon decides to revive him that is,” she said, pulling her wrist away from him.

“Emily, tell me you didn’t turn him into ash,” he sighed.

“Sure, if you don’t mind being lied to.”

“Sit.” He pointed at the bed.

Emily sat down on the bed and glared at him. She heard a loud crash outside of the palace and moved to the window. She gasped when she saw the drainpipes being removed from along the wall.

“I’ll be in the hallway if you need me. This got too far out of control this time,” he said, slamming the door.

Emily was locked in her room for two days. She demanded to see Allen numerous times, but no one would answer her. Her food trays were pushed quickly into the room and the door was left locked from the outside. She had become a prisoner in the palace.

Finally, her door opened and Damon stepped in, “Come with me.”

“No, where is Allen?” she scowled.

“Your presence has been requested in the council chambers,” he said, moving aside so she could leave.

She walked past him, apprehensively, and walked into the lower portion of the council chambers. She saw the dark gray cloaks of the four heku standing before the Equites Council. Exavior turned when she walked in and his eyes immediately fell to her bruised neck.

Emily avoided looking at Chevalier and walked over to Exavior, “You shouldn’t be here.”

He smiled, “Stop trying to protect me.”

“They won’t let me see Allen,” she whispered to him frantically.

Exavior turned to the Council, “Why has she been denied her son?”

“That was a Council decision, to keep him safe until all tempers calmed down,” Maleth explained.

“Bring him here. It’s unreasonable to keep her from him,” he said, calmly.

Leonid nodded, and a guard by the door disappeared.

“So you see,” Damon said, taking the stand, “that she is alive and well as promised.”

“Well?” he asked, and looked at her. “You consider this well?”

“Tempers flared, and we regret the actions of one of our council, but it has been taken care of,” Maleth tried to assure him.

Emily wrapped her arms around herself. She felt on display.

“What about the runes then? Have they been removed?” he asked them.

“Not yet,” Leonid answered.

“That’s disgraceful and negligent to leave that mark on her,” he scowled.

“I take it you know how to remove it then?” Damon asked, arrogantly.

“Yes I do,” he said, and Emily looked at him with wide eyes.

“We cannot kill the Encala that put it there,” he said.

“You don’t need the rune’s keeper to get it off,” he said. “Especially when it’s ink and not a tattoo.”

Chevalier scowled at him, “I have yet to determine exactly how you saw it in the first place.”

“Please don’t,” Emily whispered to Exavior.

He frowned, “Why are you keeping it from them? That wasn’t your fault.”

Her eyes were pleading.

Exavior turned back to the Council, “It’s not my place to say.”

Emily turned when the door opened, and Allen ran into her arms. She picked him up and held him tightly to her. She kissed his cheek as tears rolled down her face.

“I bring up my original complaint. It is the opinion of the Valle Council that you are repeatedly mistreating a mortal in your palace, and should be

dealt with according to the laws set forth when the ancients were banished," Exavior said to them.

"We are not continually mistreating a mortal," Maleth replied.

"Oh? That's not how it looks," he said.

"What we have here is a matter of tempers. When two are bonded and love each other, but both have tempers, it can lead to accidents," Maleth explained.

"Love each other? I've never seen anyone assault one they truly love, and I don't see any marks on the Elder," he said.

"I had to revive him from ash," Damon explained.

Exavior smiled slightly, "Self-defense, I'm sure."

"Take us with you," Emily asked, turning to Exavior with Allen still held tightly in her arms.

"She's afraid to be here," he said, watching Chevalier closely.

"Over my dead body," he scowled.

"Everybody calm down," Leonid said, standing up. "No one is in danger here, we can discuss this calmly."

Exavior raised an eyebrow. He hadn't yet even raised his voice, "I agree that it is best if she stay here, as long as she isn't kept from her son, and isn't confined in any way."

"No," Emily said, shocked. "Take us with you."

Exavior smiled at her, "It's ok, you'll be safe here."

"Why?" she frowned.

"The Valle Elders aren't going to want to let you stay with me. They will want you at their palace with the Elders," he explained.

Chevalier frowned when Exavior told her the truth.

"I do have conditions," Exavior said, "Or I will be back."

"What conditions?" Maleth asked.

"I've stated two, the other is that she be allowed to contact me at any time and I her. I will be checking up on her from time to time. I also ask that the runes be removed," he said, narrowing his eyes. His voice was calm and controlled.

Maleth nodded, "That is reasonable, though, we've been unable to get them removed."

Exavior smiled, "Does that mean you do not know how?"

Leonid glanced at Maleth and shrugged, “That is correct.”

Exavior turned to Emily, “I can do it, but it’s quite painful.”

She looked into his eyes, “Get it off of me.”

He turned back to the Elders, “I will need a ceremonial room. It’s a long process, and we cannot be disturbed.”

Maleth looked at Chevalier, and he nodded, glaring at the Valle.

“I will be back in one week to remove it. I’ll also check on her welfare at that time,” Exavior said. He turned to Emily.

“Call me if any of them so much as touch you,” he said.

Emily nodded and watched the Valle walk out of the council chambers. She was still clutching Allen in her arms.

She headed for the door, but the guards stopped her and she turned around, her eyes full of terror. Chevalier felt his heart jump. He had never seen her that terrified before. He wanted to run to her and hold her, but he realized he was the cause. The purple bruises on her neck were proof enough of that.

“There is one more thing to discuss,” Leonid said, and motioned for Emily to step forward. She took just a few steps toward the Council quietly.

“It is against faction law to fraternize with members of the other factions,” Leonid told her. “You may not have been aware of that rule.”

“Since when have I been forced to abide by the rules of the heku?” she asked softly, her eyes ran along the council members.

“We are just concerned that you became friends with one of the Valle council members,” he said, softly.

“I didn’t know he was Valle, or a council member, until the last day,” she told them.

“Yet you spent two weeks with him?”

“Yes”

“You knew he was heku?” Leonid asked.

“Yes”

“Did he tell you he was Equites?”

“No, he wouldn’t tell me his faction,” she explained.

Leonid sighed and sat down, “We will discuss this further as a Council.”

She just watched them.

“How did the Valle see the runes on your thigh?” Damon asked, frowning.

“Death, betrayal, or infidelity?” Emily asked, pulling off the essence ring.

The council members gasped.

“This one’s on you… it was still attached until a few minutes ago,” she said, walking up to Chevalier’s side of the table. She set the ring down in front of him.

Emily turned and left the room with Allen.

Chevalier picked up the ring and turned it around in his fingers. He whispered, “Two weeks.”

Leonid nodded, “Two weeks to put it back on her before the bond is completely severed.”

“Let the Valle have her. They have no idea how much trouble she causes,” Damon said, and cringed when all three Elders growled at him.

“Try, Chevalier, don’t let this fight end it for you two,” Maleth said, softly.

“I’m not sure I can fix it,” he said, looking at the ring.

“Try,” Leonid said.

“Maybe Exavior is right. Maybe she’s not safe here with me,” Chevalier whispered.

“She loves you,” Maleth said, softly. “She just needs reminded.”

Chapter 15 - Times Up

Emily heard a knock on her door and she looked up from her book, “Who is it?”

“It’s me,” she heard Chevalier say.

Emily looked at Sam frantically, and he ran to the door and stepped out, “What do you want?”

“I came to talk to Emily,” Chevalier said.

“You’ll have to talk to her through me,” Sam said, crossing his arms.

“It’s been four days. I need to see her,” he said.

“Sorry, boss’s orders.”

“She hasn’t even left her room since the council chambers, I just need to talk to her,” Chevalier said. He debated pushing the familiar out of the way and getting what he demanded, but knew that wasn’t the way to win back Emily’s affection.

“I’ll give her your message,” Sam said, and went back into her room, squeezing through the door and locking it behind him.

“What did he want?” Emily asked, sitting cross-legged on the bed with her book.

“He just wants to see you,” Sam said. He sat back down with Allen and a puzzle.

“How does this keep happening to me?” she sighed.

“Well…” Sam said.

“Oh, I know how it happens.” She glared.

“Have you asked Exavior what to do?” Sam asked her.

“No, I’m afraid to tell him,” Emily said, putting her book down, “But this room is driving me crazy. I need to get out of here.”

“Not without them noticing,” Sam said, putting the last piece in the frame of the puzzle.

“Freak,” she yelled, standing up to pace the floor.

“You need to let me get some crackers and Sprite in here or Allen’s going to… t-e-l-l.” Sam said, not looking up.

“Oh no, that wouldn’t clue them in,” she scowled.

“Ask him when he calls,” Sam suggested again.

Emily sighed, “What if they hear me? Bloody heku can hear anything.”

Emily went over to the window and looked out, “There has to be a way to get out of here.”

“We’re on the fifth floor. I don’t think you can use a sheet,” Sam said, walking up beside her and looking out the window.

“So I can’t talk to Exavior without someone eavesdropping, and I can’t get out of this room without the heku knowing anyway,” she whispered, harshly.

“I could get a rope,” Sam said, looking down.

“Me? Climb down a rope?” She looked down onto the lawn.

“True… loud music?”

“That’s it! I can crank up the TV!” Emily said, and grabbed her phone when it rang.

“Hello?”

“Emily, how are you?” Exavior asked, politely.

“Fine… one second, I need to prepare,” she said. She turned the TV volume up onto full. Allen covered his ears and frowned at her.

She whispered into the phone, “Can you hear me?”

“Barely,” he yelled to her. “Who are you hiding from?”

“Everyone, I need an opinion,” she whispered.

“Ok.” The tone in his voice changed, “Go ahead.”

She sighed and looked around to make sure Allen couldn’t hear, “I think I’m pregnant… again.”

“Oh is that all?” he asked relieved.

“Is that all? You don’t get it… I get kidnapped, beaten, locked away, tortured, hung…” He cut her off.

“I know, I’ve heard the stories,” he said, amused.

“I can’t do this right now,” she said.

“I know you are no longer bonded, but it doesn’t have to be horrible,” he said.

“I can’t even leave the palace,” she explained.

“Why? Are they stopping you?” His voice was stern.

“No, but they’ll… you know… smell,” she whispered into the phone.

“Oh, yes they will. Let me think.”

“I’m debating getting a rope and climbing down,” Emily said, finally.

“That can’t be a good idea. Mortal’s can’t fall like a heku,” he said, and she thought she heard a hint of a laugh.

“Do you think this is funny?” she asked, angrily.

“I wouldn’t say funny, but I don’t see why the panic.”

“I miss him,” Emily said, softly.

“I knew you would,” Exavior told her.

“He really hurt me this time.”

“Yes he did, and you ashed him.”

“You think I need to tell him don’t you?” she asked.

“Does it matter what I think?”

“Yes or I wouldn’t have told you,” she said.

“Yes you do, then. He needs to know if for nothing else than to protect you.”

“Ugh! That word,” she screamed, and then looked at Allen.

“Seems you have no sense of self preservation, you shouldn’t have even told me,” he said to her, bluntly.

“You’re my friend.”

“I’m a Valle, an enemy,” he reminded her.

“Not of mine.”

“I know, but you really need to be careful who you tell.”

“You too now, eh?” she asked, getting angry.

“What?”

“Telling me what to do… if I want to call the Encala and announce the impending birth then I can if I want to,” she snapped.

Exavior laughed, “Yes you can, if you want to.”

“I’m afraid to tell him,” she said, her voice lowering to a whisper.

“I know, but the Equites need to know,” he said.

“So you’re saying to tell for tactics and not for pure ‘father’ knowledge?” she asked, confused.

He laughed again, “No, I do think the father should know, but they also need to be aware that there could be problems in the near future.”

“They know that. I’m one huge problem,” she reminded him.

“Oh I don’t doubt that,” he said.

“Are you still coming to get the runes off of me?” She asked him every day toward the end of their conversation.

“Not now, Em. I can come if you want, but the runes are going to have to wait,” he told her.

“Why?”

“It’d be a risk to the baby,” he said.

“I’m tougher than you think,” she said, frustrated.

“I have no doubt,” he said, and then paused. “Do you still want me to come?”

“You come and tell him,” she suggested.

“Oh no, not me,” he laughed. “You have 10 days,” he said, more serious.

“I know,” she whispered.

“I will come as promised, and I’ll call it a welfare check,” he said.

“Ok,” she said, and hung up. She reached over and turned the TV off.

“So?” Sam asked.

“He said to tell… but he was thinking strategy, and not personal reasons. Do they all think like that?” she asked, irritated.

“Yes they do,” Sam said, fitting another piece into the puzzle.

“I’m guessing you agree,” she asked.

“Yes I do.” He grinned and took a piece from Allen, sliding it into place, “They are in the council chambers right now with no agenda.”

“No one’s being questioned or anything?” she frowned.

“No, they are discussing an offer from the Encala,” Sam said.

“How do you know?”

Sam smiled, “I can hear, too.”

“Great… here goes,” Emily said, storming out of the room. Her bare feet sounded loudly on the marble floors as she ran down toward the council

chambers. She stepped in without knocking and shut the door behind her.

“Well, hello, Emily,” Maleth said, smiling. The other council members looked over to the door.

“Can we help you, Dear?” Leonid asked.

Emily walked forward and stood, watching them, with her arms crossed.

“Emily?” Damon asked.

“Wait for it,” she said, and watched as they all looked at one another, confused. Emily avoided looking at Chevalier. She didn’t want to see his reaction.

“Emily, is there some…” Damon started, and his voice stopped suddenly. He spun in his chair away from her, and fought the internal desire building within him.

The rest of the Council gasped and turned at the same time, all of them fighting the urge to kill her. Chevalier didn’t turn his chair, he just watched her with wide eyes.

“Don’t worry, it’s yours,” she growled at him, and then left the council chambers and went back up to her room, slamming the door and locking it.

“Very smooth, Emily,” Sam said.

“Go get me some crackers,” she snapped, and he bowed and left.

“Did not see that coming,” Damon said, when the room cleared of the appetizing scent.

Maleth looked at Chevalier, “Did you know?”

He shook his head.

“Well this complicates things,” Damon said, and hit the table, trying to clear the scent from his mind.

“Talk to her,” Leonid suggested.

“She won’t let me in,” Chevalier said.

“She may now. I can see why she’s been avoiding any heku contact,” Maleth said, nodding.

“I’ll get the masks,” Damon said, irritated.

Chevalier turned to him, “Do you have a problem?”

“Yes I do. In three days, when her Valle boyfriend gets here, I see big problems,” Damon snapped, and Chevalier flinched at the term.

“Shut up, Damon, and get the masks to the guards,” Leonid said to him, sternly.

Emily heard the knock on the door but couldn’t move. She was leaning against a cold wall in the bathroom. She cringed when she heard Allen walk toward the door.

“Who is it?” he asked, just like she normally did.

“It’s Daddy,” Chevalier said, and Emily heard Allen open the door.

Emily was able to reach up and lock the bathroom door. She heard Ford run out of the nursery where his bed was, and jump on Chevalier.

His voice came from beside the bathroom door, “Can we talk, please?”

“Not right now,” she told him, and turned back to the toilet.

“Let me help,” he said, tearing the door off of the hinge and stepping into the bathroom just as she laid down on the cold floor.

“Think you’ve done enough,” she said, shutting her eyes.

“My part ends at conception, is that our new rule?” He sat down by her on the floor after he propped the door back up.

“Didn’t know we had a rule,” she whispered, not moving.

“I bet you’re mad at the timing, so feel free blame me,” he said, watching her.

“Go away.”

“No”

Chevalier handed her a cold washcloth, “I’m actually surprised you told me and didn’t just disappear.”

“You can thank Exavior for that. I was trying to find a rope to climb out the window.” She put the cold rag against the back of her neck.

“Oh? So you told Exavior?” he asked, trying to sound casual.

“Don’t worry, he yelled at me already.”

“For what?” Chevalier frowned.

“For telling an enemy faction member,” she said, and leaned back over the toilet.

“Smart guy.” He watched her.

Emily halfway collapsed down onto the cold floor and pressed her cheek against the tiles.

“It’ll be different this time, Em,” Chevalier said.

“How’s that? Because I’m single this time?” she asked, irritated that he was still there watching her.

Chevalier took the glass of Sprite and crackers from Sam when he came back into the room.

“Here’s a cracker.”

She shook her head, “No food.”

“Single or no, I’m not going to let you go through this alone,” he said, swapping the cracker for the Sprite.

She looked at it and leaned back over the toilet.

“Is this worse than before?” Chevalier asked Sam, worried.

“No, it’s just the first time you’ve been around at the beginning,” Sam told him, a little snappy.

“True,” he sighed.

Sam handed in a blanket and Chevalier took it, laying it on Emily when he noticed she was asleep.

“Should I move her?” he asked Sam.

“Nope,” Sam said, and went back to the puzzle with Allen.

Chevalier stood up and walked out of the bathroom, “I’ll get the door fixed.”

“Mhmm.”

Chevalier went back to the council chambers and took his chair.

“How did that go?” Leonid asked, concerned.

“She can’t even talk, she’s too sick,” he said, picking up a list of upcoming trials and thumbing through them.

“Get the doctor,” Maleth suggested.

“Nothing he can do.”

“Why not?” Maleth frowned.

“Mortal women become sick when they are first pregnant,” their Chief Interrogator said, and Chevalier looked at him, curiously, “Or so I’ve heard… at least.”

“There is still time,” Leonid said.

“Are you sure about your decision, Leonid?” Maleth asked him.

“Yes, I’ve been thinking about it for almost a hundred years,” he said, smiling.

“Have you set a date?” Chevalier asked.

“Yes, one week from today.”

“So soon?” Damon asked, frowning.

“No reason to prolong it,” Leonid said. “Shall we adjourn until the Valle visit in three days?”

The Council all nodded and Leonid stepped out.

Chevalier returned to Kyle’s room, where he had been staying since his banishment from his own room. Kyle looked up when he entered.

“How’d it go?” Kyle asked.

“Did you know about Em?” he asked, sitting down.

“What about her?”

Chevalier fell into a chair, “She’s pregnant.”

“Oh wow… bet that pisses her off,” Kyle said.

“Yeah, she’s thrilled,” Chevalier said. “At least I think so, I can’t seem to talk to her.”

“Sick already?”

“Yes. Now we have to deal with the Valle in three days.” He rubbed the back of his neck.

“Crackers and Sprite,” Kyle reminded him.

“She won’t take them.”

“Of course not,” Kyle laughed. “Anything to help.”

Chevalier just nodded.

“There she is now,” Kyle said, looking up at his door.

“Sounds like she’s going to try to nap, though,” Chevalier said, his head cocked toward the door.

Chevalier turned back to Kyle, “She told Exavior.”

“Might as well get a head-start on the faction tension,” Kyle said, bluntly.

“He yelled at her for telling him,” Chevalier smiled, slightly.

Kyle raised his eyebrow, “What’s his angle?”

“I haven’t figured that out yet. Befriend her and then strike at the last minute maybe.”

The tension in the council chambers was intense as the Equites Council watched the ten Valle enter, Exavior in the lead.

“Was there such a strong need for more?” Damon asked him.

“Perhaps,” Exavior said, swinging the side of his cape over his shoulder.

“We have called for Emily.”

“We cannot do the removal, not with the situation as it is,” he said.

Maleth frowned and looked at Chevalier, “He knows.”

Maleth looked at Exavior with wide eyes.

“I’m not here to take her, unless I see signs of abuse,” Exavior said.

Emily opened the door and stepped in. She was pale and shaky.

The Valle shifted nervously and turned away from her, all except for Exavior. He shut his eyes and opened them slowly, completely in control.

Exavior eyed her cautiously and turned back to the Council, “One moment, please.”

He turned away from them and went to Emily, “Are you injured?”

She shook her head, “No.”

“What’s wrong?” he asked, angrily.

“Morning sickness,” she said, and gave him a half-smile.

He relaxed and smiled, “Oh, right.”

Exavior took Emily’s arm and helped her toward the Council. Chevalier’s fingers dug marks into the wood as they tensed into fists.

“She looks unharmed,” Exavior said.

“Of course, we don’t abuse her,” Damon said, irritated.

“That remains to be seen, now doesn’t it?” Exavior said to him.

“Are we to expect your visits regularly?” Leonid asked.

“You may go,” Exavior said, looking at Leonid, who frowned. Two of the Valle ran quickly out of the room and Exavior spoke again, “Yes you may. Though not weekly, unless the need arises.”

“Who exactly appointed you her guardian?” the Equites Chief Interrogator asked, angrily.

“I do believe she did,” he answered, casually.

Emily listened to them, the voices sounded like they were coming from a tunnel. She could tell they were talking about her, but their words were

slurred and not making sense. She could feel the ground begin to move as a voice called for her.

Exavior caught her just before she hit the ground and laid her down gently.

“Emily?” he said, touching her face.

Chevalier was at her side in a blur, “Em?”

She opened her eyes, “I won’t go.”

“Go where?” Chevalier asked her, and glared at Exavior until he moved his hand away.

“I won’t go to him, he can’t make me,” she said, groaning in pain.

“It’s the rune,” Exavior said. “Is the owner here in the palace?”

“Yes,” Chevalier replied, angrily.

“Well… shut him up,” Exavior scowled.

Damon called for Kyle and blurred from the room. A few minutes later, Emily opened her eyes, panting. She sat up and Chevalier helped her to her feet. He kept her steady with a hand on her back.

“I’m ok,” she said, looking around.

“Go lay down,” Exavior said, and she nodded and left the room. When she was gone, he adjusted his cape and turned back to the Council as Chevalier took his chair.

“Was there anything else you need? We have things under control,” Maleth asked.

“You do?” Exavior asked, irritated.

“We look forward to your next visit,” Leonid said.

Exavior nodded and smiled, then walked out of the room with the other Valle.

Chevalier left the council chambers, frustrated, and went up to Emily’s room. He walked in without knocking and looked around the empty room. He could hear her in the bathroom. He went over and tried the door, when he found it unlocked, he went inside and sat down.

Emily was lying back on the floor with her eyes closed.

“Déjà vu,” Chevalier said.

“Just go away,” she said, adjusting her face to a new, cool spot.

“Put this ring on and I will leave you alone,” he said, knowing it was a low blow.

Emily put her hand out for the ring, and Chevalier handed it to her. Without even opening her eyes, she dropped it into the toilet. His hand shot out and caught it just before it hit the water.

"Funny," he said, slipping it back into his pocket.

"Can I ask you a question? Get my mind off things?" she asked, not moving.

"Sure," Chevalier said. He was glad her eyes were shut. It gave him the ability to look her over well. He didn't like how pale she was, or the way her hands shook when she moved.

"Why can Exavior eat?" She opened her eyes and looked at him.

"He can?" Chevalier seemed impressed.

"Why?" Emily scooted until she was sitting up against the wall.

"It's an acquired skill that takes a lot of time and dedication. Some use it when they interact with mortals a lot, it helps them fit in," he explained.

Emily nodded and shut her eyes.

"How did he see it?" he asked, after a few minutes of silence.

"Is it really bugging you that bad?" she asked.

He nodded, and then realized her eyes were still shut, "Yes, it is."

She sighed, “Jeff…”

“What about him?”

Emily opened her eyes and looked at him, “He… got a little… pushy.”

“Define pushy,” Chevalier asked, gritting his teeth.

“He’s just, stronger than I am, I guess,” she said, watching him.

“How far did he get?” Chevalier asked, angrily.

“Exavior stopped him,” she said.

“How far?” he asked again, studying her face.

“I don’t want to talk about this.” Emily shut her eyes again.

“Why do you always get ashamed when someone does something stupid?” he asked, irritated.

“Maybe it’s just embarrassing to admit that... yeah... once again, I was out strengthened by a mortal man,” she snapped.

“Of course you were. You can only defend against heku. That’s nothing to be ashamed of,” he said softly, trying to diffuse the anger.

“And maybe I’m not wanting to admit that men think they can take advantage of me only to find out they are right,” she sighed.

“How far did he get?” he asked again.

“Drop it.”

“No, how far?”

“It didn’t happen, ok?” she said, softer.

“Did he get your clothes off?”

Emily frowned at him, “Will you drop it if I tell you?”

“Yes”

“Then yes. So drop it, ok?”

“I hope Exavior killed him,” Chevalier growled.

“He didn’t. He just paralyzed him from the waist down,” she told him.

“Nice,” Chevalier said, then shut his mouth when Emily glared at him.

“Go away,” she said again.

“When you are feeling better, Kyle and I will work with you again. We had the one training, but never really got into the mortal part,” he said, remembering that day with Travis back on the island.

Chevalier’s heart thudded when he saw a tear fall down her cheek.

“What, Em?” he asked, softly.

“Why can’t you bring Travis back?” She looked up at him.

“We can only bring back ashes.”

“Why though?”

“That’s just how it works.”

“If I burned in a fire, could you bring me back?” she asked, honestly.

Chevalier frowned, “Why?”

“Just curious.”

“No, I don’t think we could.”

Emily used the counter to stand up and looked in the mirror. She walked over and turned on the water for the jetted tub.

“Go away,” she said again, watching him.

“Why? I’ve seen you naked.”

She frowned, “Just go, please.”

“No, I’ll join you,” he said, standing up and starting to undress.

“Chev, no,” she frowned. “We’re not married anymore.”

“Wimp,” he said, stepping into the water. “Damn, this is hot.”

Emily glared at him and stripped quickly. She felt his eyes on her as she stepped into the water and sunk down, feeling the water burn her skin. She reached over and hit the jets, keeping to her side.

“Give in, Em,” Chevalier said, pulling her feet toward him and slipping his legs under hers. “There, better.”

Emily leaned her head back and shut her eyes, letting the hot water and jets work at her muscles.

Chevalier pulled one of her feet up and began to massage it. She opened her eyes and looked at him. “What are you doing?”

“Wooing you,” he said, laughing.

“Will you let me endure morning sickness alone if I put on that damn ring?” she asked, her vivid green eyes locked on his.

“Probably not.”

“You’re a pest,” she said, and leaned her head back again.

“I’m sorry, Em.”

“No you aren’t, you were mad.”

“Yes I was. I wish you could understand why.”

“I wish you could trust me.”

The frustration built within him. He couldn’t understand how she could admit to being overpowered by a man in one breath, and then tell him to trust her to protect herself in the next.

“You, I trust, it’s everyone else I have trouble with,” he said.

“Do you trust Exavior?” she asked, as she ran her hands along the bubbles floating on the water.

“I owe him a great debt.”

“That’s not what I asked,” she said, looking up at him.

“No, I don’t trust him.”

“You thought I slept with him,” she said with a small grin.

“I did not,” Chevalier frowned.

“Yes you did. I saw you checking out my ring. It’ll be good for you to not have that visual representation of my loyalty.” She smiled fully and leaned her head back, “Besides, I don’t see a ring on you.”

Emily felt the water shift, and then felt his body press into hers and he kissed her.

She turned her head to the side, “No.”

“Damn, an order I have to obey,” he said, and brushed his lips against hers lightly, then crawled out of the tub.

“Is it sunny outside?” she asked when he left the bathroom.

“Yes, hotter than hell too,” he said, and walked out of the bedroom.

Chevalier went to meet Damon and Kyle in Damon’s office. He knocked and then entered as they were discussing shift rotations.

“Gah, you smell like her,” Damon said, staring at Chevalier.

“Sorry.” He grinned.

“Do you think Emily would notice if we posted guards on the fifth floor?” Kyle asked the Elder.

“Yes, not much slips by her, why?” he asked, and looked over the rotations.

“She won’t take a personal guard, so we’re trying to improvise.”

Chevalier picked up the list and studied it, “Oh that reminds me, I promised Emily another self-defense lesson.”

“Good idea,” Kyle said, nodding.

“This one’s a mortal one, though,” Chevalier said.

Kyle frowned, “Why? She’s not being attacked by mortals.”

“Remember Jeff?” he asked, raising an eyebrow.

Kyle’s eyes narrowed, “What did he do?”

“Something Emily won’t admit to. All I know is that Exavior stopped whatever it was and paralyzed him from the waist down.”

“Why didn’t he kill him?” Kyle asked.

“I’m guessing to make him suffer.”

“I knew I liked him some,” Damon laughed. “I want in on this self-defense class.”

Kyle grinned at Chevalier, “We could use another attacker.”

“Oh let me,” Damon said, enthusiastically.

“Can you tone it down? You’re supposed to be mortal,” Chevalier asked, shaking his head.

“Sure I can.” He grinned.

Chevalier handed the rotation list, “Looks good except for Sunday, you doubled up on the front doors for an hour.”

“Damn,” Kyle said, and erased a few things.

A panicked call came down, “Get off the roof, now, now.”

Kyle stood up and frowned, “What now?”

“Now! I said get off the roof,” a voice called from above.

Damon stood up and blurred to the roof, followed by Kyle and Chevalier. On the way up, they passed the guards, who didn’t even stop when their leaders passed.

“What’s up with them?” Damon asked, and opened the door to the roof. The three stepped out and looked around, confused.

“I don’t see anything,” Kyle said, and they walked forward a bit.

“Ahh” Damon said, pointing off to the west side of the roof.

They all looked over and saw Emily, lying out on a lawn chair in her bikini. She had her sunglasses on and was leaned back, relaxing.

“Erm…” Kyle said, turning away, “I think I’ll go finish that roster.”

“Hmm,” Damon sighed, looking at her.

Chevalier cleared his throat.

“Oh, sorry, yes… I’ll go help,” Damon said, and followed Kyle.

Chevalier sat down on the side of the roof by Emily, “You cleared out the roof.”

She jumped and sat up.

“It’s just me,” he said, chuckling.

Emily laid back down, “I didn’t tell them to leave.”

“Yes… well… between your looks and your scent, I’m imagining they felt it better to leave,” he said, smiling.

She looked down at herself. “What’s wrong with how I look?”

“Nothing, that’s the problem.”

“I just wanted some sun while I’m not worshipping in the bathroom,” Emily said.

“Worshipping?” Chevalier started to laugh, “Feeling better then?”

“For right now.”

Chevalier studied the curves and contours of her body while she bathed in the sun.

“You’re staring,” she said, not opening her eyes.

“Yes I am.”

“Did you want something?”

“You have no idea,” he said, grinning.

Emily looked up at him, “You’re in my sun.”

Chevalier moved off to the side and Emily closed her eyes again.

“Marry me,” he said, amused.

“I did that already,” she reminded him.

“Yes but then I became an…” He thought.

“Ass?” she suggested.

Chevalier laughed, “Ok, an ass, and I’m asking you again.”

Emily’s phone rang and she grabbed it from the ground by her chair.

“Hi, Exavior,” she said, smiling.

“Mostly,” she said, looking up at Chevalier.

Emily smiled widely, “Yes I will, thanks.”

“Yes I know how many days are left, good-bye.”

“I said good-bye,” she said, and then hung up the phone.

Chevalier couldn’t help but ask, “So… how many days are left?”

“Until the bond is gone,” she said. “He’s worse than you are at reminding me.”

Emily laid back down in the sun.

“Oh, he’s encouraging you to put it on?” Chevalier asked, surprised.

“Yeah, go figure,” she said.

“Ok, I give up. I’ll let you suffer morning sickness alone if you’ll put it back on,” he said, handing it to her.

“I’ll think about it,” she told him. He slipped the ring back into his pocket.

“There’s something I’ve been meaning to tell you, but you need to keep it from Exavior. It’s important,” he said, seriously.

Emily pulled down her sunglasses and looked at him, “What?”

“Leonid is retiring,” he said, watching her for a reaction.

She frowned “Like, moving to Florida for the next thousand years?”

“No, he’ll go into stasis in the ground.”

She sat up, “He’ll what?”

“He’ll be buried, Em, with honors.”

“Wait, like you did to Selest? You’re going to let them take out Leonid?” she started to panic.

“No, this is entirely different. This was his choice.”

“How long will he be in the ground?”

“He’s asked for 500 years. After that, it’s up to him when he emerges.”

“No!” Emily said, standing up. She ran into the palace. Chevalier watched her go and then looked out over the palace grounds.

“Enter,” Emily heard after she knocked. She walked into Leonid’s office and ignored the nervous way he looked at her.

“Why are you leaving?” she asked, kneeling down by him and taking his hand.

“I’m tired. It is my time for a rest.” He smiled at her.

“You can’t just go.”

“I can, in two days.” He felt pangs of guilt. He didn’t realize how this would affect Emily. The heku all understood and supported his decision.

“You’ll be hungry, and what if you change your mind in a week?” she asked.

“I won’t be hungry, I will be asleep. I won’t change my mind either. I’ve been thinking of this for almost a hundred years,” he explained.

Tears welled up in Emily’s eyes, “Is it because of the trouble I’m causing? I can stop, I can behave, I promise.”

Leonid was touched and wiped a tear off of her cheek, “No, it is not you, Emily. You are the reason I’ve stayed for as long as I have. I never really cared much for mortals; pesky, whiney species at best. You, though, are a fascinating creature and I have enjoyed spending my last years in your presence.”

“Please stay, I can’t lose you,” she said, and laid her head against his leg crying.

“You have to think of it, not as a death, I will not be dead. You need to consider it just a long sleep. I won’t even be aware as time passes.” He touched the back of her head, lightly.

“I can’t stay here without you,” she said, and his robes became wet with her tears.

“Look at me, Emily,” he said, and peered deep into her eyes. “If you take one thing from me, let it be this. Listen to Chevalier, he loves you and has only your best interest at heart. Let the heku do what they are trained to do, to protect you. You have no idea how precious you are to us.”

“Stay and I will, I promise. I’ll let the guards back. I’ll stop sneaking out…” She stopped talking when he shook his head.

“My decision is made.”

Emily sat down and leaned her head against his leg. She thought about the palace without him and worked herself back into a cry. Leonid rested his hand gently against her shoulder as he went about making the final preparations.

“Chevalier,” Leonid whispered a few hours later, when he realized Emily was asleep at his side. He wasn’t sure how long she had been. He was engrossed in making arrangements for his absence.

There was a light knock at the door, and Leonid whispered, “Come in.”

“You called for me?” Chevalier asked.

Leonid motioned the other Elder around the desk. Chevalier walked around the large mahogany desk and sighed when she saw Emily.

“I’m sorry,” Chevalier said, picking her up and cradling her in his arms.

“Don’t be,” Leonid whispered. “It’s touching that I will be missed.”

Chevalier nodded and carried Emily up to her room. He tucked her into bed and turned the lights out, and then sat in the chair and watched her

sleep. He'd been staying in Kyle's room for a while, and he missed the way she moved in her sleep, and the soft way she sometimes talked.

Just after midnight, Emily began to clench her hands in her sleep. Chevalier moved closer to her.

"Don't," she said softly. Her voice was sad and desperate.

Chevalier frowned.

"Don't be buried," she whispered.

Chevalier sighed. He didn't realized how deeply affected she would be by Leonid's rest. It was so common to the heku, that it was readily accepted. He could see though, how in the mortal realm, it would be considered a death. When Leonid wakes up, Emily will have been gone for hundreds of years. The thought sent a chill up his spine. The thought of Emily dying someday was something he avoided thinking about.

"Please," she cried, "Chev, don't."

Chevalier moved closer to her, concerned.

"Don't leave me," she said, upset.

Emily relaxed back into a deeper sleep and Chevalier sat back to ponder what would happen when she did die. He would still have children alive,

and they would have children. The Winchester line was now his line. Would he become like Ulrich and be obsessed with their protection? Would he grow angry and unfeeling when his heart ached for a mortal that had been gone for too long?

Chevalier watched her sleep and felt empty inside without her emotions running through him. He missed her scattered thoughts when she slept, and the vast range of emotions different situations caused to run through her in a day.

"I'll be good," she promised in whispers in her sleep.

Chevalier watched her, intrigued.

"Chev, don't do it," her voice was soft and tender.

Chevalier moved closer to her. She was crying in her sleep and tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"Bury me with you," she whispered.

Chevalier took the risk and crawled into bed with her. She pulled against him in her sleep and snuggled her face into his neck. He wrapped his arms around her.

Emily woke up in the morning, confused. She thought she was curled up next to someone, but when she opened her eyes, she was alone. Her

bedroom was cold and empty. Her nightmares were drifting into her morning. She felt alone and things seemed hopeless.

She opened the curtains and watched the rain splash against the side of the palace. That would mean there would be no cavalry training today. The guards would be training indoors and Sam would take care of the horses. She wondered what she would do for the day as a dark cloud of depression filled her mind like a haze.

Emily slipped into a simple black sun-dress and walked slowly down the stairs. The guards smiled at her, but got no emotion in return. She couldn't understand how everyone could be acting so normal when one of their beloved Elders was about to be buried alive. Stepping out into the light rain, she walked barefoot toward the stables and then looked around the palace grounds. The gray clouds put a dull shell over everything. It looked like the world had been drawn into a void.

"Emily? What are you doing out in the rain?" Frank asked, and she turned slowly toward him. He frowned at the lost look on her face.

"Leonid is going away," she said to him softly, blinking her eyes as the rain hit her lashes.

Frank nodded, "I know, he's going for a rest."

"No one cares," she whispered.

Frank frowned at her, “Come out of the rain.”

She shook her head, “Why doesn’t anyone care?”

“It’s not bad. He’s just going to rest for a while,” Frank explained.

“He’s going to be in the cold ground, hungry, alone, unable to escape,” she said, watching the scene play out in the rain.

“We’re all happy for him,” Frank watched her.

Emily looked up at him and her eyes were full of pain, “You’re happy he’s leaving?”

“Not happy he’s leaving, but happy for him. He’s chosen to take a break, get some much needed rest,” Frank said.

Emily turned back toward the stables and wrapped her arms around herself. She watched the horses through the rain. Tears filled her eyes again as she thought of saying good-bye to him.

Frank whispered something, too softly for her to hear, and then watched her closely.

She walked slowly over to the horse corral and leaned up against the wooden posts, watching the rain splash onto the mud.

“Em?” Chevalier said from behind her.

She didn't turn around, "You're just going to let him go."

"It's not my decision," he said, leaning against the fence beside her.

"Have you tried to talk him out of it?" she asked.

"No," he said to her. "This is a decision a heku makes in his life. Leonid thought a lot about this, and we support him."

She shook her head, "I'll stop him."

"You can't stop him," Chevalier said, and held his hand out. "Come out of the rain."

She turned around and leaned her arms against the posts, "Then what? Maleth next month?"

"Maleth hasn't even considered it, last I heard."

"Have you?" she asked, not looking at him.

"No," he lied. She didn't need to know he planned on a retirement after her death.

"Come inside," he said, again.

"No, I need to think," she said, watching the water deepen in the corral.

“Child?” she heard Leonid say from behind her. She turned and saw him smiling at her as the rain drenched his green robe.

Emily ran to him and wrapped her arms around him, “Please don’t go.”

“Look at me,” he said, and she pulled away from him and looked into his ancient eyes. He smiled, “This is what I want. I am ready for it.”

She shook her head, “You can’t be ready for this.”

“I can, it’s something I have thought about for thousands of years. Thousands of tiring years. I’ve been through wars and plagues and disasters. It wears on a heku to watch loved ones die and enemies fall. It’s my time for peace,” he said, brushing her wet hair away from her face.

“Peace?” she asked, frowning.

“Yes, peace. I think I’ve earned it,” he said to her.

Emily hugged him again and pressed her face into the robes on his chest, “Nothing I can do will make you stay?”

“No, Dear.” He touched the back of her head, gently. Leonid nodded at Chevalier and turned Emily around. She went into Chevalier’s arms and cried against his chest. He picked her up and carried her into the palace as she cried in his arms.

Emily spent the rest of the day curled up in bed. Chevalier felt helpless as he watched her struggle with the pain of the impending loss. She saw Leonid's stasis as a death and nothing anyone could say would change that. Chevalier had only seen her in such a low place once before, and it scared him to see her fierce passion gone. The fire in her eyes was drenched with tears, and she looked at the world coldly.

Chevalier curled up with her again once she'd gone to sleep. He kept her close to him until he heard the ceremony starting. Emily was still asleep and he slipped out of her room. Kyle was waiting by the door with his long blue robe. He put it on, looked back at Emily's door, and then made his way down the stairs.

Leonid chose to spend his rest in the Council City underground. He was talking happily to the gathered heku when Chevalier arrived at his side. Maleth soon joined them. The coffin was set out for everyone to see, its golden inlaid runes shone brightly in the morning sun. The inside was dark green velvet and looked warm and comfortable. It was sitting on a platform above a hole in the ground.

Chevalier stepped forward and called the others into their places. Over eight hundred heku in dark blue robes lined up in rows to say good-bye to their Elder. Leonid was smiling brightly as he caught up with old

friends and said good-bye to them. Once the Equites settled down, they all turned to face the coffin.

Leonid stepped toward the coffin as Maleth and Chevalier stood beside it. He crawled into the gold inlaid coffin and laid back, crossing his arms over his chest. He shut his eyes as Maleth and Chevalier placed their hands above his head and recited ancient incantations, sending his mind into rest and his body into stasis.

The two remaining Equites Elders then picked up the coffin's lid and covered Leonid. They performed the incantation to seal the tomb for 500 years, the time Leonid chose.

Kyle turned from his place when a commotion sounded behind him. He quickly headed toward the source of the sound. Emily was pushing frantically through the robed figures, her face filled with horror. She was fighting to get to Leonid as Kyle took her arm and she spun to face him.

"Stop him, Kyle," she yelled.

Kyle picked her up, gently, and she wrestled to get out of his grasp. He carried her back into the palace as she struggled. He knew that Leonid was already at rest, nothing she could do would bring him out. The ancient invocation sealed his fate for 500 years.

Kyle carried her to her room and by the time he arrived, she was crying angrily against his shoulder.

“Let me stop him,” she begged.

“It’s too late, Em, he’s gone,” Kyle said, holding her as her body shook.

“No,” Emily yelled, and pounded her fists into his chest, but he didn’t let go.

Kyle held her tightly as her anger turned to pain and anguish. Emily felt that she couldn’t take the pain of losing someone else. Her heart ached and shriveled in her chest, and she could hear the light chatting from down by the burial site.

Emily felt panic that it was going to be too late, they would bury him and he would be gone. She wasn’t used to being so out of control, unable to help those who needed it. Her mind began to whirl with a mixture of emotions and she found it hard to breathe. She pushed against Kyle, but he wouldn’t let go of her. The air in the room was thin and her lungs couldn’t pull in enough to sustain her. She felt darkness creeping in on her.

Kyle picked Emily up when she collapsed. He laid her down on the bed and pulled the covers over her. He watched her until the festivities were over and the crowd began to disperse.

“What happened?” Chevalier asked, stepping into the room.

“She tried to save him,” Kyle said, upset by the pain it had put her though.

“How bad was it?” Chevalier asked, as he slipped off his blue robe and sat down on the bed beside her.

“She fought me until she passed out,” Kyle said. Chevalier could hear the tense way he spoke and could only glimpse what happened.

“From her dreams, she’s afraid I’m going to do it, too,” Chevalier told him.

Kyle nodded, “I can see that.”

Chapter 16 - Coronation

“Let me see the list again,” Chevalier said, taking the papers from Maleth. He went over the names slowly.

Maleth glanced over at Emily, asleep in her bed.

“Tell me again, is she sick?” Maleth asked Chevalier.

He glanced at Emily and back to Maleth, “No. She hasn’t gotten out of bed since Leonid was put to rest.”

“Is that healthy?” Maleth frowned.

Chevalier shrugged, “I honestly don’t know. Sam said she did the same thing when her Father died.”

“But Leonid isn’t dead.”

“We know that, but to her, he is.”

“Poor child, should I talk to her?” Maleth asked, looking back across the table.

“No, Sam suggested we just let her be. I appreciate you coming in here for this though, I hesitate to leave,” Chevalier said, turning back to his files.

“What do you think?” Maleth asked as Chevalier frowned.

“I really don’t think Damon is ready. I wish I knew Torman more, I’ve only met him a few times and moving one from a coven into Eldership without a spot on the Council makes me nervous,” he said, his eyes still on the list.

“What about Quinn then? He’s been our Chief Interrogator for close to four hundred years.”

“Right now, he’s the one that’s standing out in my mind,” Chevalier said.

Maleth nodded, “I agree, shall we make the announcement? We should swear him in as soon as possible, tomorrow night even.”

Chevalier nodded, “Yes, let’s announce it today. It’s been three days, and that’s too long.”

Maleth nodded and glanced at Emily once more before leaving.

Chevalier sat on the bed by Emily and brushed her hair away from her face. She opened her eyes slowly and looked up at him.

“Hi,” he said, smiling.

She shut her eyes and pulled the covers up over her shoulder.

“Em, we’ve picked a new Elder,” he said.

She opened her eyes and looked out the window.

“That was fast,” she whispered.

“We can’t go without full leadership for too long,” he explained.

“So easily replaced.” She turned away from him and shut her eyes again.

“Today is the last day,” he said, watching her.

“I know,” she whispered, not opening her eyes.

“Have you decided against it then?” Chevalier hated to even consider it.

“I’m just tired.”

“I know you are, but I also need to know you’re awake enough to make a decision.”

She opened her eyes and sat up in the bed. She held her hand out to him, “Put it on.”

“Are you sure?” he asked, digging in his pocket for the essence ring.

She nodded and watched as he slipped it back on her finger. Emily felt the familiar pull as the ring sealed itself to her finger. She laid back down and pulled the covers up, it seemed cold in her room.

“We need a fire,” she said, shutting her eyes.

She felt Chevalier’s hand against the back of her neck, “It’s hot in here and over ninety degrees outside.”

“It’s so cold.” She burrowed deeper into the covers.

“Ok, I’ll get a fire,” he said, and watched a servant blur into the room and start the fire.

“Who is it?” she whispered. Chevalier looked down at her and she was watching him.

“Who is what?”

“The new Elder.”

“Quinn”

Emily frowned, “The quiet guy on the end?”

Chevalier couldn’t help but grin, “Quiet? He’s one of the meanest Chief Interrogator I’ve ever seen. I swear he could get information out of a turnip.”

“He’s never said anything to me.”

“He’s good at his job. I think he refrains from speaking for fear he may come across as harsh and abrasive,” Chevalier said. He suddenly realized what a good choice they made in choosing Quinn.

Emily looked back out the window, “I don’t like him.”

Chevalier smiled slightly, “You’re supposed to be at the swearing in.”

“Why?”

“You’re… in a roundabout way, part of the Council.”

Emily shut her eyes again, “I put on the ring, now stop hovering and go to work.”

Chevalier nodded, “Think about it, ok?”

She nodded and rolled over.

Chevalier went down to his desk. He knew he would have a lot of work as he hadn’t been in since Leonid’s burial. He could hear preparations being made for the swearing in of the new Elder. Chevalier left orders for Mark to wait outside of Emily’s room and alert him if she got out of bed. He lost track of time, engrossed in his work, when he heard a knock on his door.

“Enter”

Kyle stepped in and frowned, “You aren’t ready?”

Chevalier glanced up, “Is she going?”

Kyle shook his head, “She’s not out of bed.”

“Ok, I’ll be right there,” Chevalier said, and pulled on his green robe, then followed Kyle out of the room and into the great hall.

He stepped into the great hall from the back entrance and took his seat by Maleth. It didn’t slip his notice that the gathered heku all looked around

when he entered, trying to find Emily. He knew that even those heku that didn't think a mortal should live in the palace, were still fascinated by her heritage. Rumors also spread of the carnage she left in the Encala palace and it instantly made her a legend.

"Where is she?" Maleth asked, smiling and nodding to someone in the audience.

"She's not coming." Chevalier sat back in the large throne-like chair.

Maleth nodded, "Just in case, I've had fans installed to blow air toward the Council."

Chevalier frowned, "Damn, I should have thought of that."

The Council all gathered and the audience fell quiet. Maleth stood and addressed the Equites. As customary, he gave a brief detail of the roles and responsibilities of an Elder. Chevalier heard gasps from the crowd and he turned when he heard footsteps. Emily had come in the back door. She was wearing the dark blue, backless gown from her first meeting with the Equites Elders and her hair was tied up. He was always amazed at her beauty, and the few times she actually dressed up, it made his heart skip a beat to even look at her.

Chevalier could see Emily begin to blush, so he turned back to the crowd. He could feel her move to his side and place a gentle hand on his

shoulder. He fought to cage his jealousy as he noticed the number of heku that were watching her and suddenly, the exposed skin on her waist and back seemed too revealing.

The entire room fell silent when the double doors opened and Quinn stepped in. Maleth and Chevalier stood and moved to the center of the stage as the new Elder walked down the center aisle toward them. Chevalier turned and put his hand out for Emily. He forgot she wasn't aware of the proper proceedings of the swearing in, but she was also required to greet the new Elder.

She looked at him with a brief glance of panic, and then stepped forward to his side, taking his hand. Emily kept her eyes on Quinn, to keep from running out of the room screaming. He was a younger looking heku with brown curly hair and a strong muscular frame with broad shoulders. He was only a few inches shorter than Chevalier, but towered over Maleth.

Emily watched as Maleth and Chevalier spoke to Quinn in what she could only assume was Latin. The words flowed like a cadence broken only occasionally when Quinn would say something back to them. At long last, Chevalier and Maleth moved back to their chairs and Emily stood by Chevalier's side again. Maleth ended the proceedings and turned back to the Council gathered.

"Shall we go to the reception?" he asked, smiling.

The Council all stood and Damon nodded toward Emily, “She going?”

Emily glared at him.

Maleth frowned, “She is part of this Council, like it or not.”

“Yeah, well, I don’t know if I can defend her against eight hundred hungry heku,” Damon said, bluntly.

Emily stepped forward, her heels only helped her height a little, “I don’t need protection from you.”

“Oh you think? One whiff of you and you’ll be dinner.”

“Just because you have the control of a wolf, doesn’t mean everyone else does,” Emily glared at him.

“Maybe if you didn’t smell like a cupcake, Sweetheart.”

“Sweetheart?” she asked, pushing him on the chest, though he didn’t move, he glared down at her. “Why don’t you crawl back under the rock you came from?”

“Mortals,” he said, rolling his eyes.

“Fudge packer.”

“What the hell is that?” Damon asked, narrowing his eyes.

“Nothing!” Chevalier said, ushering Emily out of the room.

“Suck me!” she yelled back from the hallway.

Chevalier shook his head when he heard a response from the great hall that he hoped Emily hadn’t heard.

“Let me go. I can find my own way to the bedroom,” she growled at him.

“You can try to come to the reception,” he said, watching her walk up the stairs.

She slipped off her heels and continued up the stairs, “And give Damon the pleasure of watching the heku drool? No thanks.”

Chevalier walked back into the great hall, “Why do you have to antagonize her?”

“I… she started that,” Damon said, sounding offended.

“You’re at least 4500 years older than she is, act it,” Maleth snapped at him.

“Suck me?” Quinn asked, amused, as they walked toward the reception hall.

Chevalier shrugged and they stepped into the reception hall.

Kyle walked up to Chevalier, “I hate Elder induction nights. The guards make me nervous.”

Chevalier slapped him on the shoulder, “The one night they can all party together, let them have their fun. At least they take it out of the city.”

Emily stripped off the gown and tossed her shoes into the corner as soon as she got into her room, and then pulled the pins from her hair. She threw on jeans and a t-shirt, then dug through her closet and found her cowboy boots and pulled them on. Grabbing her Stetson and riding gloves, she walked down to the stables and put a bridle and saddle on Patra. She could hear the music from the reception hall as she hoisted herself up on the mare and took off into the night, still fuming over Damon.

Emily soon made it to the rolling hills outside of Council City and pulled Patra to a stop. She looked out over the quiet city, and then turned to the trees off to the east. She’d never quite ventured that far out, so she decided to go tonight. She kicked Patra into a canter and turned her for the tree line.

Emily felt exhilarated as Patra stepped into the dark trees. Something about the freedom of being out of the palace, away from the city, and out where no one knew where she was made her smile. She loved the sound

the wind made through the trees and the rhythmic hoofbeats on the forest floor.

The full moon emerged from behind a dark cloud and she could see things better. The trees were thinner ahead, and Emily could see a faint light. She slowed Patra down to a slow walk and moved toward it. As she got closer, she started to hear voices. Emily pulled her rifle out of the saddlebag and stepped the mare out into the clearing. She gasped, and Patra reared back as hundreds of heku eyes fell on them.

Emily pulled the reins in for control and turned Patra around, but found herself surrounded by heku guards. The rifle in her hands gave her little comfort as her path back to the trees was blocked.

“What have we here?” she heard a strange voice say.

Emily turned and looked at the heku walking toward her. There was a strong smell of alcohol in the air.

“Let the mortal out for the night did they?” he asked, sarcastically.

“They don’t ‘let’ me out,” she said. Her mind was telling her to ash them and run, but her stubborn streak won out.

“Planning on turning us to ash then?” he asked, and the guards all laughed.

Emily's eyes scanned the guards. She didn't recognize any of them and she wondered where the Cavalry was. The rifle was ripped out of her hands by a heku, who blurred to her and away, too fast for her to respond.

"Going to run back to the Elder and tell him we were picking on you?" he asked her, smiling.

"Wasn't planning on it, just as I wasn't planning on telling Kyle that you are all drinking," she said, watching him.

His smug expression became more serious, "We aren't drinking."

Emily smirked, "Whatever, I may not have a heku's sense of smell, but I sure as hell can smell that."

His eyes narrowed, "Well now we have a problem, mortal. We can't risk you running off and telling the Council."

Emily felt his hands on her waist as he pulled her down off of the mare. She was glad there was a strong wind. She hoped they wouldn't pick up her scent. He set her down a few feet from her horse and looked down at her.

"So what are we going to do with you now?" he asked, looking at the other guards.

“Now you’ve touched her too, you moron,” a voice said from the group of guards.

The heku laughed, “Oh that’s right, hands off the Elder’s property.”

Emily pushed him hard on the chest and he jerked his head back to her.

“You seem to be under the mistaken impression that I’m afraid of you,” she scowled at him, and put her hands on her hips.

He grinned, “You should be.”

She took a step toward him, “You’re also under the mistaken impression that I let Chevalier fight my battles for me.”

“Are you trying to pick a fight?” he asked her as another guard clapped him on the shoulder, laughing.

“Maybe”

“You are an exquisite creature,” he said, running his eyes down her body.

“Oh? I was under the impression you all liked boys.” she said, grinning.

His face fell for a split second and then he leaned his head back and laughed, “You are spirited, aren’t you?”

Emily turned and walked through the heku guards toward where they were partying earlier. They split, unsure if she was as happy to ash guards as the rumors told. The boisterous heku guard followed her. She went over to a log that had bottles of liquor sitting on top of it and bent down to the CD player sitting on the ground by it. She hit the play button, cringing at the rap music, and then grabbed two bottles of vodka. She turned and handed one to the heku behind her.

“Here’s to breaking all the rules,” she said, and brought the bottle to her lips and took a long drink. She lowered it and eyed the guard, who was watching her with a smirk.

He grinned and took a drink from his bottle.

“There, now we’d both be in trouble,” she said, and sat the vodka down.

The heku guards watched them both, curiously.

The guard she was talking to took another long drink, then looked at her, “Why wouldn’t you be allowed to drink? According to Frank, you can put them down.”

She smiled, “I’m pregnant.”

He laughed, “Damn, Child, you would be in more trouble with the Elder than we would.”

“Then lighten up, would you? I’m disappointed… mortals can put on a better party than this.”

He grinned and the heku broke apart. Emily laughed as she watched their idea of a party. There were bloody, violent fights, and someone turned up the music while others began to drink heavily.

“Come on, Tiny,” the heku said to her, and took her hand, spinning her out into an open area. He brought her against him and pressed a hand against her lower back. Emily was amazed at how well he danced as they moved gracefully with the music.

“Why is it you can dance?” she asked him.

“You have to do something when you’re alive for hundreds of years,” he said, and dipped her, looking into her eyes, and then stood her backup quickly. She saw his face change and she knew he had caught her scent.

“Hundreds? So you’re just a young pup.” She smiled, trying to distract him.

Emily’s body tensed as he shut his eyes and inhaled. His hands pulled her tighter against him. She watched his face as he opened his eyes and smiled.

“Young pup? Compared to you, I’m archaic,” he said, dancing again.

Emily jumped when she heard the crash of glass and the guard she was dancing with laughed.

“You always so jumpy?” he asked, and she caught sight of some of the guards smashing empty liquor bottles against a tree as he spun her again.

“I’m not jumpy,” she said to him.

“You’re not very smart either, you shouldn’t be out here,” he whispered into her ear.

“You’re seriously going to tell me what I should and shouldn’t be doing?” She frowned.

He laughed, “Not at all.”

“Cutting in,” she heard from behind her, and she was turned quickly into another guard’s arms.

As the night drew on, Emily started having fun. The guards loosened up around her and she was able to see them have fun and enjoy themselves. When she saw them, they were normally at full attention and watched her, loathingly. Now they were talking to her and she danced so much, her feet were hurting. The few times a real fight broke out, she would move to another part of the clearing.

Suddenly, someone cut the music and the silence was eerie.

Emily looked around and the guards were all staring off to the end of the clearing. The guard she'd been dancing with pushed her behind his back with one hand. Emily glanced at the remaining bottles of alcohol and ran to the log. She poured some into her hands and rubbed them on her jeans, then dumped the contents out and tucked the bottles under the log. A few of the heku standing by the log watched her, suspiciously.

Emily headed quickly for where all of the heku were staring. She could hear familiar yelling.

"Where is it? Where's the alcohol," she heard Kyle yell. She took a bottle of whiskey from a heku as she walked by, and then stepped out in front. Kyle was standing in front of four of the guard commanders, and they looked angrily at their guards.

"I have it, it's mine," she said.

Kyle turned to her with wide, furious eyes.

"What in God's name are you doing here?" he scowled.

"I crashed their party," she said, watching him.

"Get back to the palace," he demanded.

Emily crossed her arms, "No, I brought a drink. I'm the only one drinking. I'm not going to let you punish them for my indulgences."

“Emily, I’m not in the mood for your games. Either get back to the palace or I’ll have you dragged there,” he snapped.

“I’ll go back if you’ll let the guards finish their harmless little party. Nothing is going on here that’s breaking any rules,” she told him. The guards behind her were quiet and motionless as they watched her.

Kyle took a step towards her, “You’re telling me not one rule has been broken?”

“I am,” she stood her ground.

“No guards were drinking?”

“No”

“Not one of them touched you?”

“No,” she said again, glaring at him.

Chevalier blurred to Kyle’s side and Emily recoiled a bit at his anger.

“Snitch,” she growled at Kyle.

Emily stepped back by the crowd of guards.

“Come… here…” Chevalier hissed at her.

“No, whatever their punishment is, I have, too.”

“Don’t do this, go with them quietly. We can take it,” one of the guards whispered to her.

“You know I can smell you on them, Emily. If they’ve touched you, I’ll know it,” Kyle snarled at her.

Emily spun on her heels and walked through the guards, running her hands along as many as she could before she felt hands on her waist lift her and carry her back toward the palace.

“Let me go,” she yelled at the strange guard commander carrying her.

As they passed Patra, Emily kicked hard at the Commander’s knee and he stumbled to the ground, dropping her. She ran and hoisted herself up onto Patra. The Commander healed and stood up just as she kicked the mare into a gallop through the trees. She saw him heading back to the clearing as she cleared the trees.

Emily pulled Patra out of the gallop and stopped her. She was back on the hills overlooking Council City. Her mind whirled. She was in over her head this time. Now all of the commanding officers and Chevalier were angry with her, and she wasn’t sure how badly the guards would be in trouble for drinking.

Emily kicked Patra into a gallop and headed for the stables. The smell of alcohol was making her stomach turn. She pulled the saddle off and

grabbed a brush, anything to keep her from having to walk into the palace. She peered out of Patra's stall when she heard voices pass by the stables. Kyle and his commanders came into view and she ducked back into the stall as their voices trailed off.

Emily crouched down in the corner behind Patra when she heard loud footsteps approaching. She saw his boots as he stopped on the other side of the mare.

"Want to explain that?" Chevalier asked her. She was surprised that his voice wasn't angry, more irritated.

"No," she said.

"Are you drunk?" he asked, kneeling to look under Patra.

"No," she said, again.

He sighed and sat down on the straw, "We had a spy out there, and we know it all."

She frowned, "You spied on your own guards?"

He nodded.

"That's… that's awful."

“That’s necessary for just such occasions,” he said, and smiled slightly. “Course, the guards probably won’t hate you so badly now, sounds like you made quite the impression.”

“You aren’t mad?” she asked, looking over at him.

“Me? No… but I’ll deny that if you tell the guard commanders. They are pretty livid over this,” he told her. “Not the drinking even as much as the… dancing.”

Emily rolled her eyes, “I wasn’t forced.”

“No, we know that. Our informant made it clear that you were having fun.”

“So why aren’t you mad?” she asked, suspiciously.

“You needed some time away. I wish it hadn’t come so close to going badly though. They weren’t that happy when you first showed up.” He frowned slightly. This was hard for him, he was ready to kill every one of those guards and lock Emily up in her room. The thought of them dancing with her sent his jealous tendencies raging.

“I could have handled them.” She turned back to the wall.

“Yes I know. You’re just lucky your scent isn’t very strong outside,” he said, worried.

“And Kyle?” she asked, looking back at him.

“You should probably avoid him for a few days.”

Emily nodded, “The guards?”

“Their punishment will be handed down in the morning. The commanders are taking each on a one-on-one basis. Some weren’t drinking at all, and some didn’t touch you,” he explained.

“He can’t tell which ones I danced with,” Emily said, smugly.

“Heku have photographic memories, we know exactly who you danced with,” he chuckled.

“Well, beings how you aren’t mad, tell me how to help them then. It’s not fair.”

He smiled, “It’s too late. Kyle isn’t going to let them get away with so much disobedience.”

“It was my fault,” she scowled.

“Again, not the point. Each guard is meeting with Kyle and Damon in the morning”

“Why Damon?” Emily scowled.

“He’s the main enforcer. This type of punishment is severe,” Chevalier caught himself before he went any further.

“I hate this place,” she said, crossing her arms.

“I know.”

Other books in The Heku Series

Book 1 : Heku

Book 2 : Valle

Book 4 : Equites

Book 5 : Proditor

Book 6 : Ferus

Book 7 : Coming soon!